

Victor Rizescu

IDEOLOGY, NATION AND MODERNIZATION

the Romanian Patterns in Comparative
and Theoretical Frameworks



CETATEA DE SCAUN
EDITURA

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AND MODERNIZATION

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**Ideology, Nation
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and Theoretical Frameworks**

Second edition revised



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Preface

All throughout the decades following after the demise of communism, the reinterpretations of particular topics of Romanian history went together with a search for the re-conceptualization of the historical evolution of the country taken over the long run. Various layers of the process of change could be selected as privileged targets for the deployment of such an effort. The present book has to be seen as an instance of this collective search. It is premised on the conviction that any meaningful engagement with specific subjects involving the interplay between ideological patterns, social structures and public policies over the modern and contemporary periods of Romanian history can only have as a precondition the forging of an appropriate broad vision regarding the unfolding of basic political ideas from the beginning of modernization on the western model to the installation of the communist regime.

Several other convictions are closely connected with this one. There is, first, the belief that contrasting the ideological landscape of Romania to that of the West can only be rewarding if associated with the enterprise of placing the former in an appropriate comparative perspective, within the setting of the East European region to which it belongs. Connected to this, there is the need of taking seriously the West-East lags of development when studying ideologies, in no less a fashion than in the case of focusing on any other compartment of the historical process. There further follows from this a demand for broadening the range of comparisons, such as to place Eastern Europe at large in relation to the global peripheries of the western civilization (the very historical identity of the region over

the same modern centuries having to be defined as deriving from the role it has played as both the earliest of such peripheral areas and the closest to the West in terms of geographic proximity and cultural profile). There is, then, the view – elaborated at length in the introduction – that delineating the process by the means of which the bodies of thinking built around the defining patterns of liberalism, of the Left and of the Right have been transplanted from their western context of emergence into Romania has to be accompanied by disclosing the main contours of the critical sociology of modernization elaborated in the local milieu with a view to understanding the condition of a society suffering the impact of dramatic changes induced by outside influences. For sure, special compartments have to be devoted to the morphology of the national question, again with an effort of deepening the implications of the peripheral predicament in this particular area of historical growth. Three chapters are concerned with this question alone.

Pursuing in his series of works the kind of investigation defined above – leading, that is, from general to ever more particular areas of research – the author has felt the need of recurrently coming back to the specific accents and conceptualizations laid down here, in order to elaborate further upon them without ever discarding the basic statements advanced. The second edition of the book is the result of this search for clarifying broad meanings behind historical details.

1. Introduction

When considered in relation to the western sources of modern social and political thought, ideological development in the countries of the East European borderlands can be described as having consisted primarily in a dynamics of acculturation or as having been driven mainly by a thread of reactions to the pressures of modernization. Historical accounts taking the first path will focus on the process by which ideological trends of western provenance have been entrenched – on the basis of contextual adjustments and after suffering corresponding distortions – in local cultural milieus, thus contributing to the refashioning of political cultures inherited from old regimes and traditional societies. When taking the second path, the historian will bring to the forefront a consideration of the historical nexus between the growing consciousness of living within the horizon of modernity displayed by educated strata and their increasing self-understanding as both integral parts of the global society and segments of local social units affected by the interconnectedness of international life. No matter how hard they strive to combine the two perspectives, historical approaches in the field are most often led to privilege one of them.

1

The component parts of the present book are no exception. The two chapters of Part III elaborate in outline a typology – placed in an appropriate comparative framework – of ideological patterns in the modern history of Romania, issued from the adoption and elaboration in the local setting of the various parts of the modern political spectrum. Chapter 7 (“Historical Canons and

Eccentric Voices”) thus delineates several stages in the evolution of local liberalism, in order to address, then, the national varieties of the left-wing (populist-peasantist, socialist and communist) ideological trends and the historical morphology of right-wing thinking belonging to the conservative, traditionalist and fascist generic families. Migration of ideas is surveyed, here, in connection to the underlying disparities of structural conditions between West and East, and regional patterns of intellectual transformation are disclosed as fully operating in the narrower Romanian context. A gradual drive to the Right of the liberal current of thought was certainly connected, as such, with the growing influence – accompanied by inescapable radicalization issuing into fascism – of the right-wing forms of ideological pleading themselves, with the doctrine of corporatism – locked in a competing flirtation with fascism – strayed across the liberal tradition and that of conservative nationalism (yet mainly evolving from within the fold of modernizing authoritarian liberalism). While liberal thinking is vindicated as more variegated than canonical interpretations presented it so far, the Right is discovered as less pervasive than it is usually deemed, to the same extent as the Left is depicted as exercising a greater diffuse influence over the various compartments of politics and culture than we are accustomed to think about it. Ideological traditions of western provenance did not merely get embodied into clearly cut local ideological groups, but they also got employed as intellectual instruments suited to addressing specific contextual puzzles and put to work for different ideological purposes. The most obvious case is definitely that of Marxism, discovered as pervasively operating in such a guise and as incorporated into three forms of liberal social and political theory and in at least one significant expression of traditionalism, besides staying at the basis of the three

recorded varieties of the Left. The Marxist original inspiration of the populist agrarian trend is argued against a strangely persistent tendency to deny or disregard it.

Chapter 6 ("Subverting the Canon") introduces this typology by both a closer examination of the varieties of pre-communist liberalism and a deeper consideration of the interpretative canons in the history of Romanian ideologies. The subject of the local forms of liberalism is once again treated as holding a core position within the domain of studies involved, this time with more precise reference to cultural fashions and historiographical traditions that have nurtured the tendency to disregard it as unproblematic, in favor of the related emphasis on the development of right-wing cultural and ideological trends. The need for a reconsideration of the Left, together with a renewed interest for understanding, in a post-communist frame, the social and economic dimensions of pre-communist ideological constructions, are vindicated alongside the same pleading. Liberal thinking is approached by taking a new look at its conjunction with westernizer advocacy and modernist projects of social change. The established interpretative view on the topic is found as patterned in the 1970's and the following two decades by the works of Z. Ornea, written from the standpoint of a sociologically informed approach to the history of literary currents, but approximating a broadly conceived analysis of ideological trends (and despite the fact that the author himself has never been truly established as a canonical figure of exegetic literature). When contributing heavily to the consecration of Ștefan Zeletin and Eugen Lovinescu – the two foremost westernizer defenders of National Liberal Party policies of modernization in the interwar era – as classics of national ideological correctness (a pervasive opinion in the scholarship, although disseminated for a wider public to

a lesser extent after the demise of the communist regime than before that moment), Ornea also drew their historical and sociological insights into the body of contemporary secondary literature produced in the field of Romanian intellectual history, with a marked tendency to disregard the need of clarifying their status as actors of the very same history (a tendency rapidly magnified in school and university textbooks and in a large welter of popularization works).

Interwar liberal modernists argued as both defenders of Enlightenment rationalism against traditionalist culture of Romantic progeny and spokesmen for the necessary adaptations of the liberal doctrine and practices in the context of peripheral modernization and delayed state building. Ornea, in his turn, appropriated their Enlightenment advocacy – most usually branded as “modernism” by himself and his fellow exegetes – as part of a new surge of opposition against the culture of anti-western nationalism, following the refurbishment of the later in the context of communism. His inability to come to terms with the peculiar brand of liberalism that Zeletin and Lovinescu had advanced in connection to their westernizer and modernist stance was largely dependent, for sure, on the ideological limitations imposed by the same communist context. The chapter engages on redressing these drawbacks of the prevailing interpretation. Zeletin’s and Lovinescu’s arguments designed with a view to ascertain the soundness of interventionist economic practices and moderately authoritarian politics disguised as standard constitutional parliamentarianism in the Romanian context of delayed and accelerated development – anticipated by A. D. Xenopol, a pioneer of protectionist economic theory, more prodigious as a historian than his two followers yet less ready to cast his historical accounts as legitimizing narratives – are set in opposition to the

wide-ranging critical culture eager to demolish the credentials of mainstream liberalism of acting in resonance with the national interest and in accordance with the demands of modernization over the long run. In conjunction with the vindication of a high degree of theoretical soundness and empirical accuracy on the side of precisely that brand of social criticism that standard modernists scorned as immersed in traditionalist prejudices, there is set here the baseline for the larger typology of ideologies advanced in the following chapter (summarized above), by delineating, alongside the only liberal-modernist ideological attitude retained so far by the interpretative canon, two minority liberal stances. Manifested primarily in the guise of “anti-oligarchic modernism”, they criticized National Liberal Party liberalism on account of either its falsification of free-trade wisdom and of the principles of philosophical individualism – as in the case of H. Sanielevici, Ștefan Antim, George Strat and a score of other voices connected with a hitherto neglected but very significant periodical of the 1930’s – or of its reluctance to embark upon democratization and welfare policies, in faithfulness to the spirit of oppositional left-liberal rhetoric of the 1848 revolution era – as in the case of the Durkheimian sociologist Dumitru Drăghicescu.

2

Precisely the other approach mentioned above is followed in Part II. The search here is for disclosing the contours of an intellectual structure forged during the XIXth and the early XXth century Romania and induced by the growing perception of the disruptive changes brought about by modernization under the impact of western and world capitalist influences. Previous attempts to recover in this way the main thrust of the Romanian reflection on the consequences of modernizing change have tended to

be channeled into an effort of discovering the local pedigree of Latin American dependency theory and of neo-Marxist world-system theory. This time, an exercise in the archeology of ideas applied to the Romanian record of social criticism and sociological analysis – itself intertwined with political and economic theoretical pursuits and practical advocacies – has as its main objective that of bringing to light the pre-communist critical sociologies of the elites, discovered as closely connected with the sociological evaluations of the successive stages of the modernizing process and also as staying at the very core of the entire effort to come to terms with the predicament of modernization. Chapter 5 (“Paradigm Change in Critical Sociology”) discloses a sociology of the Romanian ruling elite premised on conceptualizing this one as of a bureaucratic – non-feudal and non-capitalist – nature, elaborated from the 1870’s to the 1940’s by critics of the prevailing social and political realities with various ideological orientations. As described here, the theory in question was meant to explain the failures of modernization by reference to the peculiar type of social stratification it had brought about, and also to give account of the truncated capitalist development by reference to the social entrenchment of statist policies – originally designed as instruments of accelerated change – and of the class interests staying behind the distortions of the same policies.

Shown as very original by comparison to influential turn-of-the-century theories of the elites – like those of Max Weber and Roberto Michels – the Romanian intellectual construction thus recovered is also identified as highly significant in connection to the dilemmas of post-communist social transformations. More sophisticated restatements of the same theory are discovered within the body of post-war modernization theory, development studies and comparative studies on

world-wide – and particularly East European – modernization. It is also underlined that, in the latter context of scholarship, such analyses of bureaucratization have arisen as an integral part of a paradigm change leading from the original unilinear view of modernization promoted by western historical sociology – connected with an understanding of change as necessarily generated from bottom up, under the stimulus of spontaneous transformations in the sphere of economic and social relations – to the discovery of various modernizing routes (allowing for state-induced, top down patterns of social change). As the intellectual turning point in question was anticipated by the (peripherally located) social critics of late XIXth century Romania, its present Romanian academic perception is contextually bound by the strong cultural memory of those past intellectual accomplishments.

While underscoring, thus, both the originality of national social thought and the continuing force of its cultural heritage, the chapter nevertheless provides evidence for the strange phenomenon of persistent cultural forgetfulness: no matter how strongly linked it was with the view of multilinear modernization and state-driven social change – that has never ceased to be celebrated as a Romanian intellectual innovation, before and after its consecration as an internationally celebrated revolutionary shift in the social sciences – the theory of bureaucratization was rejected in the 1940's as part of the ideological departure of communism from the body of social-democracy, and it has never been recovered ever since as an established rubric of local sociological wisdom. Chapter 4 (“A Divide over the Oligarchy”) takes a deeper look into this episode of intellectual history, identifying the early XXth century efforts to theorize the bureaucratic class, or to deny its existence, as the best vantage point for distinguishing between the main

ideological uses Marxist sociology was put to in pre-communist Romania: alongside the populist, socialist and communist such contextual interpretations, a rubric is devoted here to the Zeletinian attempt to enlist the revolutionary vision on behalf of an apology for the liberal policies of oligarchic-led modernization, by the means of an argumentation strongly recalling that of German “socialism of the chair” and of Russian “legal Marxism”.

The interconnection between the critical sociology of modernization and of the modernizing elites and larger concerns of ideological advocacy was not a preserve of Marxist thinking at the time, nor was bureaucratization the only concern of the Romanian intellectual engagement with the connection between local social stratification and international currents of social change. The historical account advanced here also tackles another story of Romanian social criticism, having as the main object the efforts of (critically) understanding the nature and function of the landholding elite inherited by the modernizing society from the pre-modern centuries. The competing ideological biases of such efforts are shown as no less powerful than those manifested by the various interventions in the debates on the bureaucratic oligarchy, and the mark left by past ideological stakes on the historiography of the agrarian issue and of feudalism is discovered as painfully obvious up to the present day. Besides, looking at the interplay between the ways the landholding class was indicted and the ways the bureaucratic predicament was then decried yields into a better understanding of ideological change, elaborated in the following chapters of the book, previously summarized. A major threshold in the intellectual history of Romania is identified to have taken place the 1860's, with the liberal discourse – hitherto featuring as an oppositional one targeting the feudal oligarchy as responsible for social inertia – leaning to the Right and

starting to act as a governmental force, appropriately adjusting itself to suit the requirements of its new political function, and the conservative discourse – previously acting as a reinforcement of existing power arrangements – shifting towards an oppositional stance and discovering the sociology of bureaucratization as a polemical device ready to be leveled against the liberal camp.

3

Together with the sociological insights into the workings of modernization, the reflections on the issue of nation building and the redefinitions of national identity in relation to cultural change induced by western influences stood as the most important threads stretching through Romanian ideological dynamics. In their turn, all these closely related fields on inquiry were articulated around the center-periphery dichotomy (although they did not always rest on an accurate understanding of it, and neither did they always employ it in a consistent fashion). Accordingly, an appropriate re-reading of the record of intellectual history targeted in the four chapters summarized above requires fresh departures in the field of nationalism studies, alongside others of the kind revolving around an up-to-date understanding of the peripheral status of Romania. The two chapters of Part I are meant to offer precisely such a methodological, theoretical and comparative orientation.

The post-communist drive away from isolationism could have only brought the national question at the center of public interest. As a response to the persistent dilemmas arising from this kind of interest, Chapter 3 (“Some Distinctions within a Classical Distinction”) takes the hugely influential distinction between the civic and the ethnic models of the nation as both a baseline and a searchlight for a wider survey of the relevant literature.

Drawing on the liberal nationalist and liberal multicultural reconsiderations of national identity from a normative philosophical standpoint – including their underlying reconsideration of the civic nation as unavoidably encompassing cultural links between its members, besides the merely civic ones maintained by the sternest proponents of this sanitized version of nationalism as alone congruent with the premises of liberal democracy – the chapter argues in favor of observing the necessary disjunction between national communities and citizenries. To support this view, it vindicates the relevance of disclosing a subtle difference between French and English traditions of thinking about nationhood, alongside the paradigmatic French-German opposition around which the dichotomous classification of the varieties of national allegiances was originally shaped. There goes together with this an emphasis upon denying the validity of the rigid classifications of real national communities in the world as either civic or ethnic in character, on the basis of references to recent historical and comparative surveys that have discovered nationalist discourses close to each of the two ideal-typical models coexisting side by side, or else succeeding each other recurrently, in the same state and national settings. Again by reference to the relevant literature, doubts are also raised regarding the deeply entrenched conception relying on a strict correlation between the civic-ethnic distinction and the West-East differentiation between political cultures and political traditions.

Stretching through this entire series of dissociations there can be grasped a sustained recent tendency of giving a more positive retrospective evaluation of the historical liberal nationalist views supporting nation building projects than it was customary for some time in the standard literature. The revisionist trend of scholarship thus identified does apply extensively to the

East European cases, and its influence is manifest in the body of all the other chapters of the book, each time it is made reference to the statist-based and nationalist-legitimated adaptations of liberalism in the Romanian and other contexts of delayed modernization. However, the chapter has also another, more explicit and better highlighted target. Against the tendency, very marked in post-communist public and academic discourses, of pointing to melting pot policies, sustained by the civic model of the nation and almost unqualifiedly embraced up until very recently by most of the western liberal democracies, as universal panacea of inter-ethnic and nationalist tensions, a pleading is advanced for acknowledging that the prevalence of full blown, yet fragmented, territorially dispersed and deeply intertwined national groups has constituted for a long time, in Eastern Europe, a predicament hard to reconcile with the same policy demands and the corresponding (unqualifyingly) civic-inspired theoretical wisdom. A recommendation for allowing that in the region, as a general rule, citizenries comprise representatives of more than one nation goes together with the same pleading, which is entrenched by brief references to the history of misleading regional attempts at civic-based nation building, as well as of persistent prejudices against the recognition of minority corporate identities and of the conception of group-differentiated rights (with a special reference to the comparison between Hungary of the Dualist period and post-1918 Romania, remarkably similar in this respect).

As already hinted at above, Romanian social and economic thought of the late XIXth and the early XXth centuries was undeniably precocious in identifying significant differences between western and peripheral patterns of modernizing social change. Thinking against the background of agrarian backwardness allowed local

innovative minds to coin valuable pieces of theorizing on the matter in advance of the findings of western comparative social science. Yet, although this intellectual tradition has always survived in some compartments of the academia, national culture as a whole has displayed a strange stubbornness in refusing to subscribe to the idea of the country as holding a peripheral identity, eventually accepting it very reluctantly. Most of branches of historical study fully participated to these last cultural tendencies, which could have only been strengthened due to the surge to European Union enlargement and integration – naturally emphasizing the European identity shared by all the countries of the continent involved, from West to East – after communism. Chapter 2 (“Romania as a Periphery”) takes issue with this long-standing national inclination of conflating a heuristic instrument with a stigma identity, also taking account of the partial – and temporary – departure of western social sciences themselves from the center-periphery theorizing, that followed after a long and fruitful enthusiasm for it. Shaped in the milieu of a German-Romanian academic exchange, the pleading developed here for fully intimating and further deepening the heuristic value of the set of ideas invoked underscores the undeniable heuristic function that the notion of the *Sonderweg* – relying to the same extent as that of “periphery” on a stark comparison between local and (more) western historical trajectories – has performed in German historiography. Arguments are also advanced in favor of dissociating the idea of periphery from its privileged association with neo-Marxist world-system analysis alone, with a corresponding emphasis on neo-Weberian perspectives of the kind.

A search for elaborating a methodological and theoretical framework for a consistent historical approach to ideological development in a peripheral setting could have only gone together with the pleading thus

summarized. The guidelines set here – briefly restated in the Chapter 7 of the book – warn against the temptation of treating the subject in a barely “diffusionist” guise, arguing instead for paying the same attention to the ideological reactions taken by non-western cultural groups towards the dissemination of western intellectual trends as to the migration of ideas itself. A stricture is made for allowing that western ideological constructions can be discovered to have acted, at the periphery, not only as adjusted re-embodiments of the same stances and under the same labels, but also as intellectual tools employed for ideological purposes specific to the peripheral context alone. Cultural criticism applied to the transformations of national identity by confrontation with the stream of acculturation and social criticism concerned with social-economic dislocations brought about by modernization are discovered to have played more significant roles as structuring factors of ideological change than political and constitutional ideas of a normative nature, and the need to disclose the autonomous functions performed by the two types of criticism is underlined to the same extent as the requirement of understanding the connection between them. In full accordance with the previously mentioned revaluation of the liberal nationalist projects of peripheral nation building, nationalist ideas are here acknowledged to have occupied a more prominent place on the ideological agendas of the peripheries than on the western agendas of the kind. Finally, it is argued that, far from leading to the internalization of a stigma, a methodology resting on the demand of taking the center-periphery distinction seriously when treating ideological development can only be conducive to better appreciating the originality of non-western contributions to the record of global cultural change, while also allowing for a deeper understanding of the West-East intellectual interconnections.

The extended commemoration of the Romanian union of 1918 offered an occasion and a stimulus for deepening the considerations advanced above regarding an appropriate understanding of the dynamics of the national question throughout the last two centuries of global historical change and across the lags of development in the modern world, as a precondition for a meaningful engagement with the unfolding of ideologies in the national space. Hence, the two chapters added in the addenda to this edition. They look back at the large-scale experimentation of the principle of national self-determination in the region of East-Central Europe and within the framework of the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Settlement, with the hindsight of the evolutions scored both in the realm of nationalist politics and in that of the most influential modes of thinking about it over the intervening period. It is deemed that, without ever requiring a revision of the pleadings delivered and the accents posed in the first part of the book, they yield into a significant clarification of them.

Taking as a baseline the prominence of nationalism as an ideological force in the countries of the area during the modern age – indeed, something that is underscored above as an integral part of the specific patterns of peripheral ideological development along the path of modernization –, Chapter 8 (“Multiculturalism as Collective Memory”) also takes account of the state of divisiveness prevailing in the sphere of the regional historical memory and resulting from the twists and turns of political change driven by nationalist motivations. Together with its antecedents and consequences, the Treaty of Trianon – which consecrated the shift of the province of Transylvania from Dualist Hungary to Greater Romania – can only be remembered as a turning point of the regional branch of this historical

process and as paradigmatic for the kind of memory scars inflicted on the peoples involved during the successive stages of all the varieties of it throughout the world. Placing the most influential international evaluations of the particular issues raised by the treaty and its context in relation to the general findings of the comparative research on the evolution of national identity, nation building and nationalist ideology, the chapter discovers the present demands for the accommodation of cultural diversity in the spirit of the multiculturalist recipes as rooted in the historical experience of the area over the long run. To the same extent, it discloses the dominant local and global traditions of theorizing on the question as the factors that have prevented the forging of an overall approach, able to come to terms with its contemporary practical intricacies, while at the same time convincingly conceptualizing the relevant compartments of its contested past.

It is the view according to which the melting-pot policies sustained by the conception of civic nationhood elaborated in the West stay as a universal panacea of nationalist conflict and inter-ethnic strife that is delineated here as the core of the misleading approaches repeatedly taken to the dilemmas of national coexistence in East-Central Europe and to the corresponding puzzles of historical interpretation associated with them. As previously shown in the book, the advocacy in favor of enhancing the inclusiveness of the prevailing definitions of national groups – against the tribalism inherent in the ethnic vision of national belonging historically extolled by the peoples of the region – must not be interpreted as implying a principled denial of the recognition of ethnic and national entities as corporate collective bodies. The need for such recognition – together with that of the erection of legislative and institutional designs meant to take account of it – has certainly been felt to a much greater extent in the eastern

part of Europe than in the western countries which have translated their historical experience of early and continuous nation-building into the theory of civic incorporation and national assimilation. The failure to accept this put a deep mark on pre-Trianon Hungarian policies in the field and has always presided over post-Trianon Romanian enterprises of the sort. No instances of better ability to tailor the western theoretical model of nationhood to the local conditions are testified by the neighboring national spaces. It is therefore the more so important to highlight the several voices of the region which stood as an exception to this general statement: Rhigas Velestinlis, Karl Renner, Otto Bauer and Oscar Jászi, all of them insightful regional pioneers of the theory of multiculturalism.

The years passed since the first edition of the book brought about the crystallization of a feature of the global ideological space that bears heavy significance for the dialogue with the heritage in the field of Romania and of its regional context (moreover holding a special relevance with respect to the effort of interpreting the nationalist segment of it). Multiculturalist theory and practice has ever more conspicuously run into excessive manifestations taking place under the heading of political correctness. In its turn, these occurrences of extremism have nourished the recognizable departure of its opposite, namely the new nationalist populism. It appears that these ideological structures have been entrenched at the two ends of a new axis of ideological polarization. Chapter 9 ("On Trianon in the Age of the New Anti-racist Protest") is predicated on the conviction that this situation is likely to offer additional insights into the history of Romanian ideological trends set in a comparative perspective (once again, with a special focus on the role played by the national question along this flow of historical change).

Starting from rehearsing the seeming contradiction between the large space occupied in Romania by the commemorative discourse about the privileged moment of nation-building represented by the union of 1918 – reinforced as it was in the realm of international law by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon – and the high resonance at the global level of the discourse demanding the removal of the symbols and sites of memory reminiscent of the record of imperialism and of the tenets of racist culture historically evolving within its orbit – a discourse apparently staying at odds with the nationalist culture inseparable from that of imperialism –, the chapter highlights the different attitudes customarily taken towards the figure of the American president Thomas Woodrow Wilson by the exponents of the two sets of concerns as best encapsulating the disharmonic juxtaposition of the latter within the horizon of the present. Indeed, while remembered by the East European commemorators of the politics of national self-determination as a hero of the historical plot they celebrate, Wilson is scorned in other places of the world on account of his support for racism in the context of the American reconstruction after the Civil War. How could a politician and ideologist indebted to retrogressive prejudices in his own national milieu genuinely serve as the promoter of a progressive creed on the world scene? Does the belated revelation of Wilson's racism not carry with it an implicit condemnation of the creed he championed at Paris in the footsteps of the First World War?

It is then argued that the two ways of speaking about the national question in history are only apparently separated by a contradiction. This is because the current struggle with the legacy of colonialism has been advanced against the background of decolonization, in its turn a historical process sustained by the principle of national self-determination, first put to work extensively in East-Central Europe after 1918 and then

applied to non-European spaces after 1945. The link between the two stages of nationalist politics is underscored in the same fashion as the original skepticism – most characteristically voiced in the ideological language of conservatism – displayed by the supporters and the academic analysts of the design in question with respect to the prospects of successfully transplanting it beyond the confines of the European continent where it had been originally articulated. The steady advance of the same kind of politics across the areas formerly dominated by colonial empires is set in correlation with the growth of theorizing about a purported post-national turn taken by the developed societies as they reach the stage of advanced modernization, itself conjoined with recipes for the accommodation of cultural diversity on the basis of melting-pot policies and benign neglect defining social attitudes. The gap thus opened between the irrepressible dissemination of nationalism at the periphery and the prevailing underestimation of its force within the West is shown as being overcome at the juncture when the politics built around national identity was rejuvenated in the idiom of multiculturalism, within the larger space of the politics of identity that has increasingly exhibited, over the last several decades, such phenomena as the growing vindications of the significance of gender difference and of the differences of sexual orientation, together with the reshaping of the meanings and implications of race and of religious denomination.

A straight line is thus identified as running from the past assertions of the right of national groups to self-determination in the part of the world where Romania is located to the contemporary worldwide assertion of identity differences. The engagement of Wilson with the project of redrawing the East European political map such as to make state boundaries as closely coincident as

possible with the boundaries of nationality retrospectively emerges, in this fashion, as a step towards the formulation of the anti-racist and anti-colonialist creed so powerfully expressed nowadays across the world and of which the memory of his own figure has so dramatically fallen as a victim. The line of argumentation advanced here also involves a conception about multiculturalism and about the discourse of political correctness from which it cannot be separated as integral parts of democratic life. It is stated, moreover, that the incorporation of the moderate interpretations of these sets of ideas into the theoretical foundations of democracy is the only possible antidote against the drive underway towards nefarious ideological polarization that was invoked above. For sure, the continuing questioning of the past ideological development of Romania and of its region can only acquire fresh meanings within the horizon of the present thus reconfigured.

Part I
Nationalism and the Peripheral Predicament

2. Romania as a Periphery: Social Change and Ideological Development

Comparative development studies with a focus on East European modernization are surveyed here in order to draw (tentative) general statements regarding the dynamics of ideological change in a peripheral setting. Long-standing regional – and particularly Romanian – prejudices towards conceptualizing local historical evolution on the basis of the “center-periphery” dichotomy are opposed, with special attention paid to their refurbishing in the post-communist cultural and ideological environment and in connection to the broader alterations of paradigms after the Cold War. The debate on Eastern Europe as a periphery – again, with an emphasis on Romania – is related to the academic discussions about the German historical peculiarities conducive to Nazism. Pre-communist ideological trends are highlighted as prodigiously original on the side of the insights they produced into the patterns of peripheral social change and the prevalence of nationalist concerns they exhibit is itself disclosed as intrinsic to the predicament of intellectual evolution in non-western contexts. Although with a hindsight it emerges as somewhat too ambitious, the theoretical and methodological frame outlined here does inform the engagements with the same issues in the following chapters.

Previous version in Bogdan Murgescu, ed., *Romania and Europe: Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat*, Bucharest, ALLFA & Edition Körber Stiftung, 2000, pp. 29-40. A version delivered at the conference “Romania and Europe: Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat”, organized by the Körber Foundation and held at Sibiu on September 15-24, 1999.

1

It has long been customary in western and especially American scholarship on Eastern Europe to describe the region as a periphery of the West. At the time of decolonization, several decades after the Paris Peace Settlement, when “East European studies” had already become an old-established academic domain, and “Third World studies” were just emerging as a burgeoning new one, some analysts in the West discovered that these two areas of research could shed considerable light on each other, and correspondingly the concepts and theoretical models elaborated for the understanding of each of them had to prove their validity by being tested against the other one as well. As one scholar wrote:

The recent history of Asia, Africa and Latin America has shown that many phenomena previously considered to be specifically East European were not so at all, but merely characteristic of the impact of western influences on non-western societies. [...] These developments place the history of Eastern Europe [...] in a new perspective, which the observers in 1914 could hardly have foreseen. [...] The wider interest of Eastern Europe’s history lies in those aspects of social and cultural development in which it resembles or differs from the history of Western Europe on the one side and of the non-European, “under-developed” countries on the other. But to see these resemblances and differences it is necessary [...] to see the real social forces, without preconceived notions of the universal validity of Victorian categories.¹

The image of Eastern Europe as the “first under-developed area” and as a laboratory suited for studying the effects of the westernization of the world became

¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, “The Intellectuals and Revolution: Social Forces in Eastern Europe since 1848”, in Richard Pares, A. J. P. Taylor, eds., *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, London, Macmillan, 1956, pp. 429-430. See also Idem, *Neither War, Nor Peace: the Struggle for Power in the Post-war World*, New York, Praeger, 1960.

deeply entrenched, so much so that the region started to be used as a training-ground for American diplomats specializing in Asian and African affairs.² Behind that part of its heritage that Eastern Europe undeniably shares with the West – and regardless of the traditional infatuation of the East Europeans with their European identity – we have to distinguish – as it was argued – structural features that make the comparison with non-European regions more meaningful, and scientifically more rewarding, than the comparison with the western half of the European continent. New analytical instruments were required for making this comparison effective – while also replacing the obsolete “Victorian categories” – and they were forged accordingly, most often being placed in the conceptual rubric of “periphery”. These instruments were employed for building social science models and historical explanations that contrasted the evolution of the West to that of the peripheral world, of which Eastern Europe, over the last several centuries, was considered to be a part.

Of course, not even within the American academic circles has this view been universally accepted. Some authors who have tackled big issues of social and political development in Eastern Europe tended to ignore the demand for a special set of concepts and theoretical models, maintaining – or implying – that the evolution of the area could be conveniently grasped by employing the conceptual apparatus originally forged for the study of western societies.³ Some others have maintained that,

² Henry L. Roberts, “Politics in a Small State: the Balkan Example”, in Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, eds., *The Balkans in Transition*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974 [1963], p. 378.

³ Cyril E. Black, “Russia and the Modernization of the Balkans”, L. S. Stavrianos, “The Influence of the West on the Balkans” and Traian Stoianovich, “The Social Foundations of Balkan Politics, 1750-1941”, all in Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, eds., *The*

although we do have to distinguish between different paths that societies might take during the transition from the agrarian, traditional world to modernity, the same theoretical models could account for any such variety of modernization processes, whether in a large or in a small country, in the East as well as in the West. Thus, the three routes to modernity identified by a scholar like Barrington Moore on the basis of broad comparisons between the largest western and Asian societies could be found replicated inside the belt of small East-Central and South-Eastern European states, in spite of Moore's own suggestion that the decisive factors in the evolution of the small countries lie outside their borders, and as such societies of the kind are not appropriate to be taken as independent units of research.⁴

Scholars who did share the view mentioned above have identified a pattern of modernization in the area displaying successive stages of evolution that have to be seen not as equivalents of the developmental stages followed by the West, but as mere distortions of them. For some authors of the kind, who have taken a (however qualified) "world-system" or "dependency" approach, such distortions are to be blamed on the perverse influences in the region of the world capitalist market centered in the West and explained by reference to the intrinsic mechanisms of global capitalism.⁵ This view does not

Balkans in Transition, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974 [1963], pp. 145-183, resp. 184-226, 297-345. See also Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: a Study in Comparative History*, New York, Harper, 1966.

⁴ Gale Stokes, "The Social Origins of East European Politics", *East European Politics and Societies* 1: 1, 1986, pp. 30-74. See also Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967, pp. 413-483.

⁵ Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: the Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York, Academic Press, 1976. See also

raise any more such an enthusiastic approval as it used to attract during the last decades of the Cold War, and successive critical departures towards it have been taken within the field of comparative modernization studies.⁶ Still, the very notions of “core” and “periphery” are often seen as a preserve of it. They smack of mere militant neo-Marxism and of an ideological denunciation of the plutocratic nations with an anti-western slant. As it has often happened in the history of ideas, the tenets of a wider school of thought have come to be associated with one particular variety of it alone. Hence, the conceptualization of the region as a “periphery” tends to be suspiciously rejected in post-communist Eastern Europe, where “liberal” and (renewed) westernizer circles are careful to take a critical distance from dependency theory, perceiving it as coming in the same package with the indigenist and illiberal form of nationalism.

Although equally concerned with the distorted nature of East European modernization, other scholars place the blame for it not on the inescapably perverse influences of world capitalism, but on the strategies and policies that the regional elites have developed in order to meet the challenge of modernization or, in more general terms, on the

Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-economy: Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979; Thomas R. Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-system Perspective*, sec. ed., Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1996.

⁶ Theda Skocpol, “Wallerstein’s World Capitalist System: a Theoretical and Historical Critique”, *The American Journal of Sociology* 82: 5, 1977, pp. 1075-1090; Charles Ragin, Daniel Chirot, “The Modern World System of Immanuel Wallerstein: Sociology and Politics as History”, in Theda Skocpol, ed., *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 276-312; Daniel Chirot, “Causes and Consequences of Backwardness”, in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1-14; Idem, *How Societies Change*, sec. ed., Los Angeles, Sage Publications, 2011.

responses of peripheral societies at large to this challenge.⁷ On this view, Eastern Europe has been transformed into a periphery precisely because of its eagerness to catch up with the West at an accelerated pace and without the required prerequisites. While in the West modernizing change has run its course as an organic process, issuing from spontaneous transformations in the realm of economy and society, on the periphery the driving force has been the desire to imitate – or “emulate” – western civilization. While in the first model the modern state only emerged as a consequence of changes in the infrastructure, in the second one the political superstructure of the western type was erected first, in the absence of corresponding social foundations, and assigned the role of the main instrument of social change. The sequence of development was thus reversed, leading to the ascendancy of the state over all aspects of social life, and to the hypertrophy of its bureaucracy. While in the core countries the category of state officials was recruited from different segments of society, and mirrored the class-division of society, produced by the dynamics of economic forces, in peripheral countries

⁷ Andrew C. Janos, “The One-party State and Social Mobilization: East Europe between the Wars”, in Samuel P. Huntington, Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: the Dynamics of Established One-party Systems*, New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1970, pp. 204-236; Idem, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe, 1780-1945”, *World Politics* 41: 2, 1989, pp. 325-358; Idem, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Post-communism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000. For the neo-Weberian pedigree of this perspective see Reinhard Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9: 3, 1967, pp. 292-346. Another comparative perspective on modernization issuing from the same school of historical sociology: Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2001.

bureaucracy became an interest group in its own right,⁸ and the states “became instruments of revenue raising as well as of income transfer from the societies at large to the new bourgeoisie of state officials”, or else instruments of “income equalization, not, to be sure, between the various economic strata of peripheral societies, but between the elites of the backward and the advanced industrial societies of the continent”.⁹ Some trappings of parliamentarianism were adopted as a façade, but the peripheral political class “integrated the administrative and parliamentary systems into a single machine in which the bureaucracy was in charge of manufacturing safe majorities whose votes provided legitimacy for the essentially bureaucratic regime”,¹⁰ a machine which “enabled the bureaucratic arm of the government, usually under liberal and progressive labels, to turn out predictable majorities, thereby debasing parliamentarianism without abandoning it”.¹¹ The attempt to imitate the West was followed by equally futile attempts to find a shortcut to the modern society of affluence on the basis of an authoritarian, corporatist political design,¹² or

⁸ Seton-Watson, “The Intellectuals and Revolution”, p. 397; Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951], pp. 338-339; Janos, “The One-party State and Social Mobilization”; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1974, pp. 19-22.

⁹ Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe”, pp. 338, 342.

¹⁰ Idem, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: the Case of Romania”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, p. 87.

¹¹ Idem, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe”, p. 342.

¹² Idem, “The One-Party State and Social Mobilization”, pp. 213-214; Philippe C. Schmitter, “Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the Political Consequences of Delayed-Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a*

by spasmodic attempts to reject the western model, as in the various fascist movements. The inter-war years witnessed the confrontation of – and reciprocal contamination between – these two political orientations.¹³

As the “dependency” view is increasingly rejected for the indictment of the West that it carries with it, so the perspective of “emulative modernization” has recently come under attack for the depreciation of non-western societies that it (allegedly) implies. Some of its critics have confined themselves to protesting against the extension of the theory over some of the historical cases that it claims to cover, amassing empirical evidence against it.¹⁴ Some others, however, have raised doubts about the very “dichotomy in the patterns of social and political development” that was originally formulated “to explain the nature of social and political change in the contemporary Third World and [...] later expanded to the historically underdeveloped regions of Eastern Europe”, and which claimed that “there [were] more similarities in the realm of politics between the [...] countries of the European ‘periphery’ in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries and the contemporary Third World than between any of them and the West”.¹⁵ Such

European Nation, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 117-139.

¹³ Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective”, pp. 102-113; Idem, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 201-312; Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: a History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1970, pp. 345-375.

¹⁴ Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, London, Longman, 1989, pp. 202-205.

¹⁵ Diana Mishkova, “Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans before the First World War”, *East European Politics and Societies* 9: 1, 1995, pp. 63-89, esp. pp. 64-65. Some authors have changed significantly their views regarding the validity of historical comparisons between pre-communist Eastern Europe and the

ideas, which are indicated here as constituting, together, much rather a piece of received wisdom than a scientific view, seem to be rejected as just another variety – albeit a rather subtle one – of the western “Orientalist” and hegemonic discourse.¹⁶

Actually, East European scholars have always been very reluctant to accept a “peripheral identity” for their societies, despite some occasional enthusiasm for the neo-Marxist dependency theory.¹⁷ So deeply ingrained is the notion that the region has always been – and has to be conceived as – an integral part of European civilization, that the suggestion of looking to India or Brazil in order to better understand Hungary, Romania or Bulgaria tends to be perceived here as yet another proof of the (still) rather exotic character of American academic fashions, or else as a testimony for the resilient lack of “historical sense” on the part of social scientists of all persuasions. The drive to European integration could have only estranged local scholars further from subscribing to this way of thinking. For sure, there continue to be heard some (mainly western) voices who highlight the relationship between the “peripheral” past of

post-war Third World: see Joseph Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria: Origins and Development, 1883-1936*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959, respectively Idem, *Pilsudski's Coup d'État*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966.

¹⁶ Compare Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, sec. ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

¹⁷ An occurrence of the kind: Ilie Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critică românească*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984. Compare Ivan T. Berend, György Ránki, *The European Periphery and Industrialization, 1780-1914*, transl. by Eva Pálmai, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982; Jacek Kochanowicz, “The Polish Economy and the Evolution of Dependency”, in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1989, pp. 92-131.

the region and its present predicament.¹⁸ Within the region, however, much more common are attempts to understand its historical heritage by employing conceptual and theoretical frameworks tailored for making sense of European historical realities alone and resting heavily on intra-European comparisons.¹⁹ Given all these, it seems likely that the tradition of thinking invoked will end as a casualty of the profound change that the social science paradigms have suffered since the end of the Cold War, being driven to the grave without ever being examined in full detail in the East as also without being reconsidered, in the light of present developments, in the West.

2

A comparison between the notion of the peripheral status of Eastern Europe and that of a German “special path” of historical evolution might be in order at this point. Some decades ago, a British and an American historian took a famous intervention in the German academic debate on the *Sonderweg*.²⁰ They pointed to the fact that the idea of

¹⁸ Andrew C. Janos, “Continuity and Change in Eastern Europe: Strategies of Post-Communist Politics”, *East European Politics and Societies* 8: 1, 1994, pp. 1-31; Idem, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, pp. 329-406.

¹⁹ An influential model (although itself informed by core-periphery analysis): Jenő Szűcs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe”, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29: 2-4, 1983, pp. 131-184. Compare Ivan T. Berend, “The Historical Evolution of Eastern Europe as a Region”, in Ellen Comisso, Laura D’Andrea Tyson, eds., *Power, Purpose and Collective Choice: Economic Strategy in Socialist States*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 153-170.

²⁰ David Blackbourn, Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984. See also Jürgen Kocka, “Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: the Case of the German *Sonderweg*”, *History and Theory* 38: 1, 1999, pp. 40-50.

German abnormal development over the long run, as it was customarily understood at the time, rested on an over-enthusiastic adoption by German historians of some (mainly) Anglo-American social science theories (of the kind offered by such scholars as Alexander Gerschenkron, Barrington Moore or Ralf Dahrendorf²¹) and on their eagerness to take the historical experience of England, France and the United States as a rigid standard against which the experiences of all other societies in the world had to be measured. Beyond their narrower concern with Germany, they raised general questions regarding both the limits of social science paradigms as heuristic instruments for historical studies and the appropriateness of invoking the particular historical evolution of the westernmost countries as a canon of “normal” development. Their declared aim was not that of rejecting the idea of German peculiarities altogether, but that of disclosing the contours of a scientific orthodoxy, establishing the connections between various components of it that were not always perceived as being connected as such, of bringing to light certain views that were circulating as not fully articulated presuppositions and of reworking them in order to obtain a more accurate historical picture. They addressed in the first place a German, and not an Anglo-American audience, discovering that the importation of ideas across the Atlantic had augmented their distorting implications.

If measured with the western yardstick, countries like Romania – and the others placed to the East of Germany – are less likely to appear as strikingly peculiar (although a variety of long term historical evolution

²¹ Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: a Book of Essays*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1976 [1962]; Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, London, Weindelfeld and Nicolson, 1967.

conducive to totalitarianism has been claimed for the case of Russia²²), but rather as instances of a developmental pattern characteristic of the non-western world generally. The notion of “periphery” can be seen, therefore, as a suitable counterpart of the German *Sonderweg* in the field of East European studies.²³ For sure, East European scholars cannot be said to be less prone to a fascination with (more) western academic fashions than their German colleagues, who subscribed in large numbers to the idea of the *Sonderweg* (interpreted in negative terms²⁴). Therefore, we might have expected the same kind of clarifying intervention from outside in the local debate concerning a peripheral pattern of change pertaining to the region to be long overdue. We can easily notice that it is not, at least as far as Romania is concerned. The explanation might be rather that the notion has always been used only reluctantly, as carrying the connotations of a stigma identity, than the fact that the traps inherent in employing it have already been avoided. At a time when the Romanians – as the East Europeans generally – are claiming their European identity more eagerly than ever, and are protesting more forcefully than ever against any attempt by outsiders to project another identity on them, it might prove useful for them to take issue with a view which claims that the structural similarities between this region and Latin America, Asia or Africa have been stronger, over the last two centuries, than the cultural links with the larger European community. The

²² Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974. See also Richard Hellie, “The Structure of Russian Imperial History”, *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 44, 2005, pp. 88-112.

²³ Kocka, “Asymmetrical Historical Comparison”.

²⁴ On the previous, positive interpretation of the same idea see Blackbourn, Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, pp. 2-4.

remaining part of this article will also try to argue that the historical picture of Romania as a periphery should not have the embarrassing overtones that it most usually has for educated Romanians and that a certain dignity could be ascribed, after all, to the condition of being “peripheral”.

3

While no sustained attempt at probing international theorizing about the peculiarities of peripheral development on the basis of fresh research has been advanced by recent Romanian scholarship, they do seem to be supported by the Romanian social thinking of the period predating the Second World War. Contemporary interpretations of peripheral politics can only obtain further credibility from the fact that virtually all the elements which they put together can be identified, at least in a crude form, and of course differently arranged, across a large spectrum of Romanian (proto-)sociological utterances from the past that display, otherwise, various ideological preferences. At the same time, such past Romanian social critics and theorists are retrospectively infused with additional respectability, once it is thus established that their core intellectual concerns are still wholly relevant and legitimate nowadays, and besides emerge as essentially different from the corresponding basic concerns of classical social and political theory elaborated in the West. For sure, statements of this kind are not made for the first time. Theoretical and comparative studies on modernization produced over the last decades did often stress their partial indebtedness to non-western views on the same issues coming from older times, and emphasize that some of the backbone ideas of present-day development theory were anticipated in the

context of pre-communist East European ideological debates.²⁵

However, it could be argued that some larger implications of such connections have not been elaborated upon to the full. Recent perspectives on East European modernization – supported, as said, by older Romanian approaches to the peculiarities of belated development – hold that, when trying to give account of the process of social change on the global scale, “we deal not with a single process, but with two different processes: one, the process of innovation in the Occident; two, the gradual diffusion of these innovations from the core area to the peripheries of the world system”.²⁶ Accordingly, “as the dynamics of these two processes vary considerably”, it is a task incumbent upon us to “identify two different patterns of social and political change”,²⁷ or else “to develop a general paradigm for the study of peripheral politics”.²⁸ An implication regarding the need for a corresponding paradigm appropriate for studying the evolution of social and political ideas in peripheral countries – and for the analytical tools appropriate for disclosing it – might be drawn from this. Indeed, granted that “the domestic political activity” in countries like Romania “is understandable only as a variety of responses, involving the copying, modification, or rejection of western political and ideological models, to the social and political dislocation that growing contact

²⁵ Daniel Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development: the Zeletin-Voinea Debate Concerning Romania’s Prospects in the 1920’s and Its Contemporary Importance”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 31-52.

²⁶ Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary*, p. 313.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

²⁸ Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective”, p. 74.

with the West has brought about”²⁹, and acknowledging – in more general terms – that, when studying modernization, we deal with both “the rise of a successful material civilization in a handful of countries” and “the responses of the rest of the world to this particular and ongoing process”,³⁰ we are led to ask questions regarding the peculiarities of the *intellectual* response to the expansion of western civilization³¹ exhibited by peripheral countries like Romania.

“Ever since their emergence as an independent nation the Romanians have been preoccupied, almost obsessed, with the nature of their relation to the West”.³² It would be definitely unfair to say that this obsession has not been paid much attention from the part of historians of ideas. But we still need a better understanding of how was thinking on the relation to the West articulated with other ideological patterns, and of how should we retrospectively assess its relevance as a factor contributing to the general dynamics of Romanian culture. To the same extent as the scholars of political history, the intellectual historians vacillate between approaching the realities of a peripheral country on the basis of analytical tools originally forged for the study of western phenomena and trying to replace or supplement them with instruments especially designed for their new task. Too often historians treat the intellectual debate on the periphery as only a translation of the western

²⁹ Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. VI-VII.

³⁰ Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective”, loc. cit.

³¹ See, in this connection, Traian Stoianovich, “The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution, 1830-1880”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1: 3, 1959, pp. 242-272. Although hugely comprehensive, the work of Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: a Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998, hardly gives a clue to an understanding of peripheral ideological dynamics applicable to pre-communist Eastern Europe.

³² Roberts, *Rumania*, p. 339.

one and endeavor to ascertain local counterparts for every intellectual category or cultural formation displayed by western history. Thus, notions like “liberalism”, “conservatism” or “socialism” are often applied to non-western evolutions without any serious search for a specific conceptualization of the local ideological dynamics.³³ Giving account of ideological development in a peripheral country would then be tantamount, according to this approach, to understanding the process of acculturation and tracing the diffusion of cultural idioms and political discourses from the western metropolis to the cultural colony.

There is also the opposite temptation: that of treating western-induced ideological labels featuring in the non-western public discourse and the declared ideological commitments of political groups operating in such contexts as mere disguises for the always pressing concern of the relation to the West. Although sometimes consciously trying to strike a middle ground between the two stances, scholarship in the field informed by a comparative perspective has refrained from spelling out the basic principles of a specific conceptualization applying to peripheral ideological development, in connection to the patterns of social and political transformation characteristic to a peripheral society.³⁴ A

³³ See, otherwise, Victoria F. Brown, “The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: the Case of Romanian Liberalism”, in Stephen Fischer-Galati et al., eds., *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1982, pp. 269-301.

³⁴ Suggestions for such an approach can be taken from Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, which occasionally speaks about “Third World ideologies”, exemplified by the Romanian case over the period stretching from 1880 to 1945. For a shorter statement see Idem, “Theorizing Underdevelopment: Latin America and Romania, 1860-1950”, *Review: a Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of*

modest proposal of the kind – drawing on the Romanian case of the XIXth and the first half of the XXth century – is advanced in the following.

4

Once we accept that the languages of political thought³⁵ in peripheral areas are primarily shaped as reactions to the challenge of westernization, addressing as such different predicaments than western political languages, we can give a new assessment to the problem of ideological diffusion: indeed, while western political thinkers define their attitude towards modernity in the terms of their own culture(s), their non-western counterparts define their attitude towards the West by employing notions of western provenance. Depending on the context, they pick up various components of the western welter of intellectual traditions, using them as instruments employed for interpreting the local predicament. Accordingly, we have to draw a distinction between two types of public discourses featuring in peripheral societies: first, local political languages, basically defined by reference to process of modernization on the western model; and second, “interpretative

Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations 11: 4, 1988, pp. 453-496. Very insightful in this respect: Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development”; Idem, “Ideology, Reality, and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars”, *East European Politics and Societies* 3: 3, 1989, pp. 378-411.

³⁵ This is to vindicate a history of peripheral ideologies following the demand of conceiving “the history of political theory not as the study of allegedly canonical texts, but rather as a more wide-ranging investigation of the changing political languages in which societies talk to themselves”: see Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 105. See also Richard Tuck, “History of Political Thought”, in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995 [1991], pp. 193-205.

languages”, that is intellectual traditions – or particular mixtures of them – borrowed and adapted as instruments serving the purposes of the contextual ideological competition, while also enabling its participants to inquiry meaningfully into the conditions of backwardness and the mechanisms of development.³⁶

³⁶ Thus, for example, Marxism at the periphery has acted less a political ideology in its own terms than as an intellectual instrument – that is, an “interpretative language” – with the help of which various peripheral political languages could be structured. Most characteristic are populism and social-democracy, both of them acting primarily as forms of theorizing about the proper way for a backward country to adopt western institutions and social structure (see Michael Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53: 131, 1975, pp. 248-271; Idem, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 55: 1, 1977, pp. 65-89). Other significant examples can also be invoked. Ștefan Zeletin was a liberal according to Romanian criteria – in so far as he defended a strategy of modernization/westernization best incarnated historically in the practices of the Romanian National Liberal Party. But to achieve this task he made use of an interpretative language which employed heavily the Marxist historical sociology: see Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 114-115; Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development”; Love, *Crafting the Third World*, pp. 46-50. The distinction between interpretative languages used for making sense of local conditions of delayed modernization and peripheral political languages could also help us to avoid such confusing practices as that of classifying the corporatist Mihail Manoilescu sometimes as a “modernist” or a “westernizer” (categories which are themselves equated most commonly with “liberal”), and belonging together, as such, with thinkers like Eugen Lovinescu; and at other times as a “fascist” or “extreme-right” theorist (categories most often equated with “traditionalist” or “anti-western”), and belonging together, as such, with political writers like Nichifor Crainic or Nae Ionescu (see Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995, pp. 24, 265-283). Manoilescu’s stance (common to most other corporatists of the region) can best be described as a modification of the mainstream Romanian liberal ideology and practice, whose major rationalization had been given by Zeletin. He was pleading for the same old aim of emulating the West, only recommending a different strategy, and employing a slightly different interpretative language. His views did not involve any general

Political theory in the West operates at two levels: the explanative and the normative. It advances evaluative-normative statements and policy prescriptions on the basis of historical-sociological descriptions and explanations. Indeed, the connection between facts and values, or between explanations and norms, has been a central philosophical concern of modern western philosophy. On the periphery, otherwise, evaluative judgments and philosophical-normative theorizing have always tended to play a different role, as values and norms have come together with the overall western model of development, after having acquired prevalence in the West at a certain historical juncture. Accordingly, political theory is here primarily concerned with elaborating historical and sociological analyses meant to ascertain the degree of compatibility between the imported model and the local conditions. Furthermore, these last ones are targeted to establishing whether westernization has proceeded appropriately, leading to the desired results, or has been pursued on a distorted pattern, failing as such to bring forth the promised benefits. On the basis of such factual inquiries, ideological pleading moves on to the prescriptive issues involved in the objectives of modernization (philosophical dilemmas regarding the nexus between explanations and norms being themselves of a lesser significance). It follows that the retrospective understanding

rejection of western "rationality", as in the case of the traditionalists. At most, they involved an overestimation of it: see Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 192-198; Schmitter, "Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu"; Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State", p. 292; Love, *Crafting the Third World*, pp. 71-98. The presence or the absence of a certain interpretative language can give account of the presence or absence of certain typical attitudes towards the West. Thus, the fact that the Latin Americans were less acquainted with Marxism than the Romanians can help explain the more belated emergence of peripheral ideologies in the Latin American case: see Love, "Theorizing Underdevelopment", p. 478.

of past ideological utterances has to classify and assess them by reference to their ability to formulate perceptive insights into the consequences of modernization and far-sighted prescriptions for developmental policies.³⁷

A further difference between western ideological development and the unfolding of ideologies on the periphery is predicated on the somewhat different roles played by nationalist ideas and concerns in the two contexts. Nationalist thinking – and the very modern concept of the “nation” – emerged in the West, in connection to the process of modernization, against the background of a medieval and early modern body of political theorizing elaborated on the basis of such non-nationalist notions like the “individual”, “society” and the “state”. No matter how great significance they have acquired meanwhile, nationalist principles have stood as secondary ingredients to the philosophical project of modernity, much rather than as fundamental constituents of it. The tension between Enlightenment universalism and national particularism has itself been constitutive to the dialectical evolution of western political thought over the past two centuries. By contrast, in peripheral settings nationalist concerns tend to act as the generative principle of all ideological discourses.³⁸

³⁷ Different normative positions could be advocated by reference to one and the same assessment of the current state of modernization, as was the case with the Romanian social-democrats and populists: see again Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism”, pp. 75-77.

³⁸ Some wide-ranging approaches to East European nationalism informed by a center-periphery perspective: Peter F. Sugar, Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle, The University of Washington Press, 1969; Peter F. Sugar, *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion*, Brookfield, Ashgate, 1999; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of Southeastern Europe*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994; Idem, *An*

Political debate in peripheral societies that have entered the orbit of western influence draws on the absorbing preoccupation with the relationship between indigenous cultural traditions and the western model. Concepts like “individual”, “society”, “state”, or “universal mankind” are inherent in the latter,³⁹ and they tend to be invoked as secondarily relevant for the sake of shaping further the trajectory of modernizing change. Instead, ideological pleading tends to privilege cultural systems and symbolic legacies – however they are labeled, as “western” or “eastern”, “Catholic” or “Orthodox” – as main references for envisioning the national future.⁴⁰

Any sustained effort of understanding the relationship between the national community and the modernizing process centered in the West gets mainly channeled, in peripheral societies, on two lines of inquiry and discursive

Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe, Aldershot, Variorum, 2007.

³⁹ This also holds true for the idea of the nation, including its basic varieties. This is why the perspective proposed here does not imply subscribing to the practice of distinguishing between a western (civic) and an eastern (ethnic) form of nationalism. For classical formulations of this distinction, see: Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background*, New York, Macmillan, 1961 [1944], pp. 455-576; John Plamenatz, “Two Types of Nationalism”, in Eugene Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: the Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, Edward Arnold, 1976, pp. 22-36. See also the typology of nationalist movements in Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990 [1983], pp. 88-109. See, however, Andrzej Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kosciuszko*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, p. 5: “It would not be too difficult for a critic of Kohn’s theory to demonstrate that all the characteristics which he regards as specific to Central and Eastern European nationalism could also be found in Western Europe”.

⁴⁰ French and German models could thus be often invoked in the same way as bearing normative implications for the unfolding of modernization/westernization: Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București, Humanitas, 1997, pp. 186-194.

development: that of cultural criticism, focused on national identity under the impact of acculturation; and that of social criticism, focused on social and economic change in the frame of world capitalism, as constituting the hard core of the westernization process. As historians, literary critics, philosophers of culture or folklorists emerge as more vocal and influential in the public space than political and legal theorists when addressing issues of the first sort, so economists and sociologists do the same when problems of the second kind come on the agenda.⁴¹ The interplay between the two strands of the ideological development is as significant as the distinction between them. Indeed, one and the same peripheral political language can display different attitudes towards the western cultural model and, respectively, towards the world-economy dominated by the West.⁴²

5

Such an energetic vindication of the need and legitimacy of approaching ideological and cultural developments in Romania and Eastern Europe on the basis of a sharp “center-periphery” dichotomy might sound strange and misplaced in the end. Once again, however, this attempt to grasp the peculiarities of peripheral ideological evolution is meant to underscore the originality of cultural and social

⁴¹ Many times they are treated separately, as for example in Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development”; Love, *Crafting the Third World*, respectively in Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1991; Idem, “National Ideology and National Character in Interwar Romania”, in Ivo Banac, Katherine Verdery, eds., *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, New Haven, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995, pp. 103-133.

⁴² As exemplified by the various liberal, “neoliberal”, populist-peasantist or corporatist ideological currents in Romania and in other East European countries.

critics in non-western settings, while at the same time drawing a framework appropriate for getting deeper historical insights into the same innovative endeavors. Emphasizing the difference of kind – not just of degree – between the two discursive contexts goes together with a new emphasis on the fact that ideological debate on the margins of Europe evolved in the pre-communist period as a response to the same kinds of challenges that Third World intelligentsias and western specialists in development studies came to confront after the Second World War. The occasional re-readings of the East European welter of thinking on social modernization and cultural change as anticipating later trends in the comparative historical sociology of modernization were mainly inspired by the emergence of dependency theory and of neo-Marxist world-system analysis in Latin America and the United States, and accordingly they revolved around the effort of disclosing the pedigree of the latter trends.⁴³ Proving that a way of thinking has a venerable ancestry does not prove anything about its validity, however, and critics of the same intellectual trends could easily argue that it is precisely this ancestry which can raise doubts about the theories in question: far from offering any new insights into workings of the present-day international economy, and far from posing any original challenge to mainstream economic wisdom, they would have to be seen as just the refashioning of nefarious preconceptions, whose origins stretch back to the very beginnings of capitalist and industrial development and which have been associated, at times, with reprehensible political stances.⁴⁴ A more comprehensive re-reading should thus go beyond the occasional occurrences

⁴³ See, again, Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development”; Love, *Crafting the Third World*.

⁴⁴ Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective. Populism, Nationalism and Industrialization*, sec. ed., London, Routledge, 1989, pp. 18-61, 142-157.

of the rudiments of dependency theory, in order to disclose an overall intellectual framework that for the first time circumscribed and addressed coherently the broad problem of globalization, alongside that of the encounter between western and non-western societies.

The current landscape of political theory has recently been described as shaped by the fusion – arising from conversational exchanges – between the western canon and the various non-western traditions encountered by the former during its expansion.⁴⁵ Drawing on the Romanian case placed in a regional comparative view, the perspective proposed here on the dynamics of ideologies and political languages on the periphery is intended as an analytical tool allowing a better understanding the centuries-long conversation between the colonizer and the colonized.

⁴⁵ James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995; See also Siep Stuurman, “The Canon of the History of Political Thought: Its Critique and a Proposed Alternative”, *History and Theory* 39: 2, 2000, pp. 147-166.

3. Some Distinctions within a Classical Distinction: Revising the Civic-Ethnic Dichotomy against the East European Background

On its descriptive side, the distinction between a civic and an ethnic conception of the nation has been applied to East European history and politics primarily with a view to underscoring the strong and long-term impact of exclusionary nationalism on local political cultures. Also in connection to the region, the same dichotomy has most often been used normatively in order to advocate the implementation of melting pot policies as closely approximating as possible the standard western ones. A full awareness of the intricacies displayed by the analytical tool in question has most of the time been lacking. The paper surveys precisely those intricacies, taking advantage of the recent surge of innovative works on the topic, as well as on the related ones of the philosophical significance of national identity and of the normative approaches to multiculturalism. After thus making several distinctions within the civic-ethnic distinction, it argues that the melting pot model sustained by the principles of civic nationhood and informed by western historical experience has never squared well with the regional predicament. Acknowledging this is important, whatever precise

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institutional designs targeting the local multicultural puzzles might otherwise be adopted.

1

The opposition between a civic/political/contractual and an ethnic/cultural conception of the nation is one of the intellectual tools most widely used in any attempt to come to terms with the problems of national identity and of nationalist politics and ideology. It is generally considered today as the most convenient device that can be used for distinguishing between the varieties of nationalism that are deemed compatible with the basic framework of liberal-democratic political life and others that are seen as conducive to various forms of authoritarianism. As such, it has been adopted as a yardstick for measuring both the policies of the states towards individual citizens and minority groups and the demands of minority groups towards states. It has also become a very popular academic device in post-communist Eastern Europe, where it is usually taken as offering the final (theoretical) answer to all basic questions regarding the relationship between citizenship and ethnicity.¹

As already hinted at in the very first sentence above, the two parts of the dichotomy go under various names. However, most commentators agree that, whatever the exact words employed, the ideas involved are always much the same. The civic nation is an association which can be theoretically reconstructed on the model of the social contract. It is constituted by virtue

¹ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, New York, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1994; C. A. Kupchan, ed., *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationalism and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

of the individuals' agreement to comply by certain shared values that are constantly renegotiated in public life. The ethnic nation is constituted by virtue of a combination of elements that stand beyond the volition or control of individuals, like descent, language or (even) religion. According to a remarkably clear and thorough recent presentation, the opposition invoked is that between a conception of the nation that is "artificial, universalist and [...] individualist" and another one that is "particularist", "collectivist" and "organicism". The civic, or political, or contractual definition of the nation

is deemed artificial because the nation is considered the product of a free association of individual wills which, on the basis of rational discussion, has reached an explicit or implicit consensus around publicly proclaimed principles and their institutional embodiment. It is universalist in the sense that, in principle, individuals can become citizens of the nation, provided that they agree to submit to the laws that reflect the underlying compact. Finally, [...] [it] is individualist in that, as it is formed of the confluence of separate wills, the individual (in terms of his or her existence, integrity or interests) can be said to precede the collectivity in a chronological and ontological sense. The implication is that one is an individual first, an abstract exemplar of humanity dissociated from all particular attributes; and that one's social determinations, whether those of ethnicity, gender, class, family, or status, are without relevance to the determination of one's national citizenship. In this sense, nationality does not, strictly speaking, constitute a social determination, for it remains contingent upon individual's accord. And it follows that the nation itself is to be considered a contingent fragment of abstract humanity.

By contrast, the [ethnic or] cultural nation is defined less by an original accord than by a common relation to some combination of historical memory, geography, kinship, tradition, mores, religion, and language. [...] The conception is particularist in that each nation is unique and can be neither generalized nor imitated. It is collectivist in that it claims that individuals cannot live outside society (and by extrapolation cannot live a complete life outside the society of their birth). In the contractual conception the individuals constitute the nation, but here the nation is said to form the

individual (and possible to constitute individuality as a national trait). Finally, it is organicist in the sense that the national society, and the individual citizen's attachment to that society, are said to be rooted in determinants that lie beneath that surface of reason and volition provided by the nation's laws – and therefore beyond the individual citizens' cognition and control.²

However, although it seems unproblematic – and it looks like our sole task is to carefully identify the specific cases pertaining to each of the two species of nationalism –, the civic-ethnic distinction carries with it a great array of confusions, which are exhibited when it is used in political or academic argumentation. As such, a danger exists that it can act as the very opposite to what it has originally been intended for: it might hamper the effort of forging democracies in the region instead of supporting it. By drawing on recent literature on the topic, the present paper aims to disclose some of the assumptions that currently go together with the civic-ethnic dichotomy in daily political rhetoric and sometimes in scientific discourse. In other words, it tries to make some distinctions within the “civic nation” - “ethnic nation” distinction. Definitely, the issues briefly touched in the following can get further elaborations. The main target here is to carefully delineate them.

2

The first distinction refers to the way the two varieties of nationalism are located on the world political and cultural map. It is customary not only to consider that two basic conceptions of nationhood have featured throughout the historical record of modern times, but also to look at the civic and ethnic conceptions as

² Brian C. J. Singer, “Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking Their Opposition”, *History and Theory* 35: 3, 1996, pp. 310-311.

constituting defining characteristics of the western and the non-western societies, respectively. The *locus classicus* of the dichotomy is a comparison between the French and German views of national belonging. In the aftermath of the war of 1870, scholars like Ernest Renan and Heinrich von Treitschke argued over the ambiguous nationality of the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine. The Frenchmen claimed them on behalf of their country by virtue of their explicit consent, while the Germans maintained that their Germaneness was conspicuously proved by their blood, language, customs and mores. Although at the time the Germans got the upper hand and the two provinces were annexed to the Second Reich for the following five decades, the ideological struggle was won by the French: Renan's essay "What is a nation" of 1882 – with its famous definition of the nation as a "daily plebiscite"³ – was to establish itself very soon as the canonic expression of the civic conception. The German conception was accordingly consecrated as a remnant of tribalism and a hinder to political modernization. In 1907, the German historian Friedrich Meinecke took over the challenge and, in his monumental book *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, subscribed to the distinction between "cultural" and "political" nations at the factual level, while denying its normative relevance: in his view, the two views must be seen not as placed in a hierarchical relationship, but as relying on irreconcilable philosophical premises and embodying ethical-political values with equal claims to validity.⁴ Meanwhile, the civic

³ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" [1882], in Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 8-22.

⁴ Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, transl. by Robert B. Kimber, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970. For other streams of the German reflection on the national question in the same period: Alfred Pfabigan, "The Political Feasibility of Austro-Marxist Proposals for the Solution of the

conception had been traced back to the English-French Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and made coextensive with an individualist worldview, while the cultural conception had been traced back to Herder and German Romanticism, and made coextensive with a holistic worldview. Decades before Meinecke, the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies had already argued that the individualist “society” and the holistic “community” constituted equally sound models of human association.⁵

The debate over the two conceptions of nationhood was fuelled by the two world wars, and what had come to be seen as primarily a German doctrine was further compromised with the defeat of German militarism in 1918, and again in 1945. At the same time, what had originally been merely a French-German debate emerged as an influential topic of scientific inquiry throughout the western world. The search was on now for a rigorous way of delineating, on the general map of the nationalist phenomenon, those parts that could not be made compatible with the rules of modern and civilized political conduct and that were to be correspondingly expelled from the social-cultural body of established or emerging democracies. By enlarging upon the French definitions, the civic model was found to characterize not only French political culture but also – and for some authors even to a greater extent – that of the other core and westernmost countries of the western civilization, namely Britain and the United States. Thus in a famous text published in

Nationality Problem of the Danubian Monarchy”, in Uri Ra’anan et al., eds., *State and Nation in Multi-ethnic Societies: the Breakup of Multinational States*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991, pp. 53-63; Zenonas Norkus, “Max Weber on Nations and Nationalism: Political Economy before Political Sociology”, *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29: 3, 2004, pp. 389-418.

⁵ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, transl. by Charles P. Loomis, East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1957.

1918 by the British political theorist Alfred Zimmern, the German idea of the nation was contrasted to the entire western tradition of civic or political nationalism.⁶ Increasingly, however – in connection with the redrawing of Eastern Europe’s map according to the principle of national self-determination and with the first stirrings of nationalist demands in the areas of European colonization⁷ – the western view of the nation came to be opposed not only to the German one, but also to what started to be described as an “eastern” conception of national belonging. In an influential short book by the British historian Lewis Namier, the failures of mid-XIXth century democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe were blamed on the clash between liberal-democratic principles and the linguistic nationalism – of the same sort as the German one – of the peoples inhabiting the area⁸. The German way was discovered as setting the pattern for the evolution to independent nationhood and unified statehood of all the European national groups to the East of Germany, and of virtually all the non-European peoples. And the difficulties of these countries in adopting western political institutions and practices were correspondingly discovered as to a

⁶ Alfred Zimmern, *Nationality and Government: with Other War-time Essays*, London, Robert M. McBride, 1918.

⁷ Alfred Cobban, *National Self-determination*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1947 [1944]; Elie Kedourie, ed., *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, New York, World Publishing Company, 1970.

⁸ Lewis B. Namier, *1848: the Revolution of the Intellectuals*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993 [1944]. The same vision restated in Idem, “Nationality and Liberty” [1948], in *Vanished Supremacies: Essays on European History, 1812-1918*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963, pp. 31-53.

great extent inherent in their underlying adoption of the ethnic conception of the nation of German provenance.⁹

This tendency of considering the civic conception of the nation as confined to the westernmost part of the West and the ethnic conception as universally spread over the rest of the world has become a commonplace in the post-war decades. It acquired the most influential expression in a 1944 book by the American historian of Czech origin Hans Kohn,¹⁰ but was accepted by many other scholars. Some of them went even further in emphasizing this West-East dichotomy. According to the British political scientist of Montenegrin origin John Plamenatz, the Germans – together with the Italians – followed in the XIXth century a pattern of nation-building that, however different from the Anglo-French one, nevertheless had recognizable western traits. For Plamenatz, the French-German fault-line on the map of nationalism had to be drawn further to the East: the actual full-blown embodiments of ethnic or linguistic nationalism were the Slavic and other East European peoples, which in their turn set the model for post-decolonization nationalism outside Europe.¹¹ The American sociologist of Russian origin Liah Greenfeld went the opposite way, relocating the same division line to a more western position. In her understanding, the ideological pattern based on invidious comparison and resentment and governing the gradual departure from the principles of civic nationhood – associated as they were

⁹ Kedourie, ed., *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*. See also Robert Randle, "From National Self-determination to National Self-development", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31: 1, 1970, pp. 49-68.

¹⁰ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background*, New York, Macmillan, 1961 [1944].

¹¹ John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism", in Eugene Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: the Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, Edward Arnold, 1976, pp. 22-36.

with individualist values in the context of the pioneering English national community of the XVIth century – was elaborated in France, where civic nationhood came to be infused with collectivist overtones. The Germans and the Russians – together with most of the other people of the Earth – only radicalized that tendency, by adding the determinants of blood and soil to the same anti-individualist trend (the only pure embodiments of civic/individualist nationalism being Britain and the United States).¹²

The sharp opposition between western and eastern nationalism came to be challenged by scholars who argued – as the Polish philosopher and historian of ideas Andrej Walicki – that “it would not be too difficult for a critic of Kohn’s theory to demonstrate that all the characteristics which he regards as specific to Central and Eastern European nationalism could also be found in Western Europe”.¹³ In the same way, early conceptions of nationhood in various East European contexts were discovered as patterned on the principles of republican political thought and therefore as having a civic or

¹² Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1992. For a summarizing statement see Idem, “Nationalism and Modernity”, *Social Research* 63: 1, 1996, pp. 3-40.

¹³ Andrej Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kosciuszko*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, p. 5. See also Fredrika Björklund, “The East European ‘Ethnic Nation’: Myth or Reality?”, *European Journal of Political Research* 45: 1, 2006, pp. 93-121. Also relevant is Maria Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism”, *Slavic Review* 64: 1, 2005, pp. 140-164, as well as various chapters from Iván Zoltán Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006.

political content.¹⁴ Whatever the future findings expected to accrue from this line of scientific inquiry, we must beware of conflating the theoretical distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism with a rigid West-East dichotomy.

3

The second distinction is closely connected to the previous one. The practice of employing the civic-ethnic dichotomy for differentiating between the political cultures of the world has gone hand in hand with the tendency of conceiving each national culture as heavily dominated, over the long run of historical time, by one of the two varieties of nationalist thinking. However, recent scholarship has discovered that the two conceptions succeeded each other recurrently, as dominating voices, in most national contexts. Cycles of cultural nationalism in the countries of civic tradition¹⁵ and cycles of civic

¹⁴ Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood*. See also Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "An Enlightenment Perspective on Balkan Cultural Pluralism: the Republican Vision of Rhigas Velestinlis", *History of Political Thought* 24: 3, 2003, pp. 465-479.

¹⁵ For the recurrence of cycles of ethnic and civic nationalism within the same polity, see John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1987. See also Idem, *Modern Nationalism*, London, Fontana, 1995. For an approach to the American case from much the same perspective see Michael Billing, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage Publications, 1995. For East European historical evidence: Marina Germane, "Civic or Ethnic Nationalism? Two Competing Concepts in Interwar Latvia", *Nations and Nationalism* 18: 3, 2012, pp. 439-430. A recent historical perspective underscoring the exclusionary dimension of early western national identities: Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

nationalism in countries of ethnic tradition¹⁶ were accordingly disclosed.

Some scholars went even further. They not only argued that the two varieties of nationalism can and do coexist with each other – succeeding each other as the most vocal discourses – in real political life, but they also maintained that the juxtaposition and interplay between them is a precondition for a sound liberal-democratic political life. According to this view, the civic-ethnic dualism within one and the same national context is predicated on the basic dualism between society and the state. In the first nationalist discourse that can be characterized as thoroughly modern – that of the French Revolution, issuing from Abbé Sieyès’ work *What is the Third Estate?* – the nation was conceived in a strict contractualist manner, as coextensive with the democratic polity, and the notions of “national” and “democratic” were employed as interchangeable. The “will of the nation” – “one and indivisible”, and just another name for the Rousseauist “general will” – stood as the only valid source of political legitimacy. Political factions competed with each other, each of them trying to establish itself as the only legitimate interpreter of the nation’s voice. But this revolutionary rhetoric tended to make all things social a matter of political concern and society was threatened to be engulfed by the state. Society was devoid of any consistency of its own, being

¹⁶ The French-German/civic-ethnic dichotomy has also been applied to explaining the difference between the *jus solis* and the *jus sanguinis* patterns of citizenship legislation: see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1992. However, recent works have discovered that the principle of *jus sanguinis* became dominant in German legislation late in the XIXth century and in very specific historical circumstances: see Andreas K. Fahrmeier, “Nineteenth-century German Citizenships: a Reconsideration”, *The Historical Journal* 40: 3, 1997, pp. 721-752.

always threatened to be absorbed by the polity. The subsequent emergence of the discourse of cultural nationalism alongside the civic one has to be seen as conducive to the (re-)discovery of society, which at that moment “slips out from under the polity and acquires, beneath the surface of contractual forms, a properly societal ‘substance’”.¹⁷

4

The third – and perhaps the most important – of the distinctions is that between the nation imagined according to the civic model and the very body of citizenship. In most abstract terms, the civic-ethnic distinction can be reformulated as an opposition between “subjective” and “objective” criteria for defining the national group. In the first model, we can be said to belong to a nation only if we think about ourselves as belonging to it, that is, by virtue of an act of consent of our subjective will. There are no objective traits to stamp us as members of that nation, or to deny our access to another one. In the second model, an individual is part of the nation irrespective of his or her will, and by virtue of some objective characteristics, as blood, language or religion (when taken as an inherited trait and not as a matter of individual choice). Not possessing precisely those characteristics that are considered as defining for the nation in question can prevent the individual’s acceptance to the membership of it, no matter his or her eagerness to obtain that acceptance. A terribly sharp expression of this view of national belonging is given by the traditionalist Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu.

¹⁷ Singer, “Cultural versus Contractual Nations”, p. 329. More historical evidence supporting the same argument in David A. Bell, “*Lingua Populi, Lingua Dei*: Language, Religion, and the French Revolutionary Nationalism”, *The American Historical Review* 100: 5, 1995, pp. 1403-1437.

Taking into discussion the claims of the Greco-Catholics to present themselves as Romanians, he concluded that, when departing from the Christian Orthodox faith, they lost contact with the true sources of Romanianess. Even an important Greco-Catholic intellectual like Samuil Micu, who offered works fundamental for the strengthening the sense of national identity of the Romanians – contributing decisively to disclosing and establishing the idea of their Latin origins – cannot be considered a true member of the Romanian nation. He can be granted at most the honorific title of a “good Romanian”, but not the bare status of a Romanian without qualifications.¹⁸

However, the practice of using concepts like “civic” or “political” for designating the nation defined by subjective criteria has led to the related one of conceiving it as one and the same thing with the state citizenry. It could be argued that this widespread confusion issued from the French tradition of thinking about nationhood and citizenship and from the no less common tendency of looking to political arrangements and cultural patterns elaborated in the French context as to models with universal relevance. In France, the sense of nationality was forged, across centuries, in the territorial matrix created by the medieval and early modern monarchy.¹⁹ This long process of gradual elaboration was followed by a short and dramatically intense period of nation building during the revolutionary and Napoleonic age, when all

¹⁸ Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor*, ed. de Dan Zamfirescu, București, Roza Vânturilor, 1990 [1933, ed. de Mircea Eliade], pp. 194-198.

¹⁹ Collete Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late Medieval France*, ed. and transl. by Susan Ross Huston and Fredric L. Cheyette, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1991; Peter Sahllins, “Fictions of a Catholic France: the Naturalization of Foreigners, 1685-1787”, *Representations* 47, 1994, Special Issue: “National Cultures before Nationalism”, pp. 85-110.

regional peculiarities were melted into the democratic (and the populist-militarist) melting pot.²⁰ From Rousseau and Sieyès, through Renan, to contemporary authors like Louis Dumont,²¹ Dominique Schnapper²² and Pierre Manent,²³ a most influential trend of thought in France identified the quality of a French citizen with the fact of belonging to the French nation, while also offering this conception as valid for the entire mankind.

Because they have always had to be aware of the differences between Englishness and Britishness (as also, one might argue, because of the strong cultural imprint left by the experience of overseas colonization),²⁴ the British, by contrast, have grown accustomed to carefully observe the difference between nation and state, citizenship and nationality. The foundational texts of the

²⁰ Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Nationalism and the French Revolution", in Geoffrey Best, ed., *The Permanent Revolution: the French Revolution and Its Legacy, 1789-1989*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 17-48; Singer, "Cultural versus Contractual Nations".

²¹ Louis Dumont, *German Ideology: from France to Germany and Back*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994. A critical commentary in Josep Llobera, "The French Ideology? Louis Dumont and the German Conception of the Nation", *Nations and Nationalism* 2: 2, 1990, pp. 193-211.

²² Dominique Schnapper, *The Community of Citizens: on the Modern Idea of the Nation*, transl. by Séverine Rosée, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1998. For a summarizing statement see Idem, "Beyond the Opposition: Civic Nation versus Ethnic Nation", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 22, 1998, pp. 219-234. A critical commentary in Josep Llobera, "The Concept of the Nation in French Social Theory: the Work of Dominique Schnapper", *Nations and Nationalism* 4: 1, 1998, pp. 113-119.

²³ Pierre Manent, "Democracy without Nations ?", in *Modern Liberty and Its Discontents*, ed. and transl. by Daniel J. Mahoney and Paul Senton, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, pp. 185-196.

²⁴ Gerald Neumann, *The Rise of English Nationalism: a Cultural History, 1740-1830*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1987; Richard Bourke, "Liberty, Authority and Trust in Burke's Idea of Empire", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61: 3, 2000, pp. 453-471.

British philosophical (and critical) reflection on the national issue – John Stuart Mill’s *Considerations on Representative Government* of 1861²⁵ and Lord Acton’s essay “Nationality” of the following year²⁶ – are built on the basic premise that national groups are not coincident, as a general rule, with state boundaries, and formulate the question of whether they have to be adjusted to each other. The fusion of citizenship and nationality – that in the French case is taken as a matter of fact – is seen here as a problem that can be given different solutions. Thus, Mill advocates the principle of national self-determination, arguing that there are strong reasons why nation and state should be made, as far as possible, conterminous.²⁷ By contrast, Acton argues the opposite case, condemning the principle of the national state as a form of utopian politics.²⁸ Later British scholarship in the field bears the imprint of those original theoretical inquiries.²⁹

It emerges, thus, that the civic-ethnic dichotomy should be accompanied by a distinction between the “French” and the “British” conceptions regarding the

²⁵ John Stuart Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government” [1861], in *Utilitarianism. On Liberty. Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. by Geraint Williams, London, Dent, 1996, pp. 391-398.

²⁶ Lord Acton, “Nationality” [1862], in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, Verso, 1996, pp. 17-38. The article also gives a hint to the difference between the English and the French patterns of nation building: see esp. p. 29.

²⁷ Georgios Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality*, London, Routledge, 2002.

²⁸ Timothy Lang, “Lord Acton and the Insanity of Nationality”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63: 1, 2002, pp. 129-149.

²⁹ Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in Its Formation*, New York, Harper, 1927; *Nationalism: A Report by a Study Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939; Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: an Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London, Methuen, 1977.

relationship between citizenship and nationality. And we could even argue, further, that the latter view is better suited to the conditions of the non-western world (including Eastern Europe), where we can very hardly find places exhibiting such a near-overlapping between civic solidarity and national identity as obtained in the French context.

5

Fourth – and connected to the third point made above –, there is the problem of pondering the precise role that cultural determinants have to play in shaping the civic view of the nation. Again, terminological practice has led to recurrent confusions, as it is commonly taken for granted that the boundaries of the civic nation can and must be drawn without any reference whatsoever to the peculiar cultural traits of a national community. If the nation is coextensive with the body of citizens, it follows that the allegiance of the individuals to the latter can only be the same thing with their devotion to the laws and institutions of the polity. What holds the individuals together in a national society is their acceptance of a set of (continuously renegotiated) political values, and any intrusion of cultural elements into the definition of that social unit could become a step towards relapsing into particularism, collectivism and self-deceiving national mythology. If the nation is to be reconstructed on the contractualist model, it follows that the individuals deliberating the terms of the contractual agreement have to be conceived, in strict liberal terms, as defined solely by their abstract reason, without any reference to their cultural inheritance. The civic or political nation is a public affair. Culture has to be discarded from any connection with the public realm and relegated to the level of private life.

Some authors have tried to be consistent with this demand and to make it explicit, by advancing a theoretical model of political “patriotism” – devoid of any cultural determinants –, as against any kind of (irreducibly “cultural”) nationalism. This is the path taken, for example, by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas³⁰ and the Italian political scientist Maurizio Viroli.³¹ They both presented nationalism as a fallacy of modern political life, issuing from the deeply rooted mistake of dragging culture into the realm of politics. Things that should have always been kept separated from each other were thus connected by the modern idea of the nation-state. According to this one, a good polity has to be grounded on the foundation of a common culture, shared by all or most of the citizens. The allegiance to the common laws has to be strengthened by a devotion to the distinctive culture that encompasses the political association. However, once the realm of politics was thus vitiated by the illegitimate intrusion of cultural factors, the door was opened for all the horrors associated with integral nationalism that makes the entire political life dependent on the higher purpose of preserving and enhancing the spirit of the nation. Accordingly, our task today is to separate again culture from politics, to rule away the confused compound of nationalist politics and to recover the sense of civic patriotism which held together the ancient and early modern city-states.

Some other authors went the opposite way, proposing a model of nationhood that meets the requirements of the civic model while frankly displaying

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe”, in Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Citizenship*, New York, The State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 255-282.

³¹ Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: an Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995.

the dimension of cultural peculiarities. This is the path taken, for example, by the British political theorists David Miller and Margaret Canovan.³² They have both argued that the strictly political patriotism of the kind offered by Habermas and Viroli is not a realistic solution: in modern political life, culture is deeply intertwined with politics and the state simply has to take account of this inescapable intermingling.³³ This should not be seen as an inherent danger to democracy. A sound conception of the nation has to accept that this one cannot be defined without any reference whatsoever to cultural markers. However, these cultural traits should be submitted themselves to the “daily plebiscite”. They should be considered as themselves a matter of public debate and as dependent upon individual consent. Civic nationalism is itself a form of cultural nationalism, but with the contractual element added as an important ingredient.

6

Fifth, the civic-ethnic distinction has been associated with a certain long-standing attitude of the discipline of political philosophy towards the issue of national identity. This characteristic stance has consisted in conceiving nationalism – no matter how much sanitized on the basis of the civic model – as a necessary evil for liberal democracy, and not as an intrinsic component of it,

³² David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995. Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 1996. More to the point: Idem, “Patriotism is Not Enough”, in Catriona McKinnon, Iain Hampsher-Monk, eds., *The Demands of Citizenship*, New York, Continuum, 2000, pp. 276-297.

³³ For basically similar statements see Bernard Yack, “The Myth of the Civic Nation”, Kai Nielsen, “Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic Nor Civic” and Will Kymlicka, “Misunderstanding Nationalism”, all in Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York, The State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 103-118, resp. 119-130, 131-140.

having a positive function to perform. National sentiment or allegiance is to be seen, in this view, as a powerful force that has to be accommodated by the modern liberal state, but not as a constitutive element of it. Recent political theorists – branded as “liberal nationalists” – have challenged this academic orthodoxy, arguing that the long-term armistice between nationalism and liberalism has to be renegotiated and transformed into a permanent peace. If rightly understood, national identity has to be conceived as an integral part of the normative foundations of liberal democracy. National allegiance is not a hinder to the functioning of the latter but a very precondition of it. The reordering of the intricate web of pre-modern forms of state into the modern system of nation states has gone hand in hand with the advances of liberalism and democracy:³⁴ it follows that the two processes have to be seen as closely related and complementary, rather than as inescapably conflicting with each other. There must have always been a certain fundamental affinity between nationality and modern democracy. Hence, we must disclose the links between the two and draw further upon them for the sake of improving our political condition.³⁵

The liberal nationalists have indicated four such significant connections. First, nationality is to be promoted from the standpoint of the liberal conception of the autonomous individual self. According to the

³⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1987; Michael Mann, ed., *The Rise and Decline of the Nation State*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990; Michael Mann, “The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism”, in John A. Hall, I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth and Belief*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 137-165.

³⁵ In what follows, we mostly rely on Will Kymlicka, Christine Straehle, “Cosmopolitanism, Nations States and Minority Nationalism: a Critical Review of Recent Literature”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 7: 1, 1999, pp. 65-88.

standard liberal view, the individual social actor has to be conceived as unencumbered by any particular determinants, and nationality has correspondingly been treated suspiciously as implying a commitment to communal values that can only endanger the individual freedom of choice. Liberal nationalists argue that, contrary to this common view, national identity should actually be seen as constituting a precondition for rational choice. As one theorist of the kind said, “familiarity with a culture determines the boundaries of the imaginable”.³⁶ The individual can learn to exercise his or her deliberative reason and ability to make meaningful choices only in the milieu of an “encompassing culture”. Even the choice to abandon the national context where he or she was born and raised and to adopt another one is possible only on the basis of the previous education of the individual deliberative reason within the cultural space of nationality. National cultures constitute “contexts of choice”: hence, they should be helped to survive and to flourish, by employing political means if necessary, because they are conducive to the development of individual autonomy.³⁷

Second, nationality deserves a good assessment when approached from the standpoint of procedural democracy. Democratic life is based on deliberation and trust. These ones are made possible, or in any case feasible, by virtue of the fact that people understand one another in the medium of a common language, and are familiar with one another as members of a single cultural community. As a pre-political form of solidarity,

³⁶ Joseph Raz, quoted in Kymlicka, Straehle, “Cosmopolitanism”, p. 71.

³⁷ This point is most forcefully made in Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993. See also Charles Taylor, “Cross-purposes: the Liberal-communitarian Debate”, in Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 159-182.

nationality serves as a kind of glue that keeps together the members of a citizenry. Again, it has to be protected, by using political means if necessary, in so far as it is conducive to enhancing democratic virtues.

Third, nationality has been discovered as valuable from the standpoint of welfare state policies. These ones require large-scale redistribution of resources between different layers of society and between different regions of the state. They require, thus, from some of the individuals to make sacrifices to the benefit of their fellow-citizens. But the readiness of some citizens to accept such sacrifices is enhanced if all the citizens share a common culture. For more than a century nationality has tended to be a symbol of the political Right.³⁸ It has to be recovered now by the Left and employed as a device for consolidating the policies of redistribution. Once again, the use of political means for the protection of nationality is acceptable, as long as the higher task in view is recognized as part of the liberal democratic agenda.³⁹

Fourth, there is a most general reason for looking at nationality as a constitutive element of modern political life. Neither the foundational principles of liberalism nor those of democracy can offer sound criteria for spelling out on what grounds the boundaries of a state should be drawn. Modern political thought has never provided a

³⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, sec. ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004 [1992], pp. 101-130; Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism: from the Middle Ages to the Present*, transl. by William E. Yuill, London, Blackwell, 1996, pp. 231-302.

³⁹ For this and the previous point see especially Miller, *On Nationality*. For a summarizing statement see Idem, "The Nation-state: a Modest Defense", in Chris Brown, ed., *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 137- 162. See also Brendan O'Leary, ed., "Symposium on David Miller's *On Nationality*", *Nations and Nationalism* 2: 3, 1996, pp. 407-451.

satisfactory answer to the question of how to mark the legitimate limits for the territorial expansion of a political structure, precisely because it has generally been assumed – although it has seldom been stated clearly enough – that the answer was provided by the principle of the nation-state. This long-standing presupposition can now be made explicit – although in somewhat milder terms than in XIXth century *Risorgimento* thinking⁴⁰ –, and acknowledged as an integral part of liberal democratic theory. It can be accepted that nationality can offer one criterion – although definitely not the only one – for marking political boundaries legitimately. This criterion should be taken as valid as long as it does not conflict with other political values.⁴¹

When speaking of nation or nationality, all these liberal nationalist arguments take for granted the civic model of nationhood. However, the authors embracing this position also tend to subscribe to the point made beforehand, namely to the idea that cultural markers cannot be expelled altogether from the civic definition of the nation. Furthermore, while the standard discourse on civic nationalism rests on presenting it as the second-best alternative to no nationalism at all, the liberal nationalists present it as a political idea valuable in its own.⁴²

⁴⁰ David G. Rowley, “Giuseppe Mazzini and the Democratic Logic of Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism* 18: 1, 2012, pp. 39-56.

⁴¹ Brian Barry, “Self-government Revisited”, in *Democracy and Power: Essays in Political Theory I*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 156-186.

⁴² For several criticisms of the liberal nationalist position see Daniel M. Weinstock, “Is there a Moral Case for Nationalism?”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 13: 1, 1996, pp. 87-100; Andrew Vincent, “Liberal Nationalism: an Irresponsible Compound?”, *Political Studies* 45: 2, 1997, pp. 275-295; Bhikhu Parekh, “The Incoherence of Nationalism”, in Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York, The State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 295-325.

Sixth, making the previous point is conducive to tackling the issue of collective rights and multiculturalism. Some of the supporters of the liberal nationalist stance have maintained that, if consistently developed – and applied to specific contexts –, it issues into a “liberal multiculturalist” conception, which involves the demand for collective rights granted to minority cultural groups within a state. They also argue that such a policy would not only be compatible with the basic principles of liberalism but can actually be inferred from the very philosophical premises of the latter. The liberal state traditionally claims to rest on the bare idea of individual rights and collective rights are accordingly rejected as derived from non-liberal principles. As liberalism emerged in opposition to pre-modern privileges enjoyed on a corporative basis, granting collective rights to national minorities would imply relapsing into pre-liberal practices. In actual fact, however – argues the Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka⁴³ –, as long as the state encompasses more nationalities, it is in practice led to grant virtual collective rights to a segment of the citizenship, namely the majority national group. By the simple fact the language with the greatest number of speakers is adopted as the official language of the state, its members enjoy unacknowledged privileges over their fellow-citizens that belong to minority groups. Liberals have traditionally claimed that a liberal state is neutral with respect to the national allegiance of the individual citizens, in the same way as it manages to be neutral

⁴³ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995. A forceful criticism: Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: an Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001. See also Michael Murphy, *Multiculturalism: a Critical Introduction*, London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 62-95.

with respect to their religious faiths: as religion, minority nationalism should be treated as a matter of private life, and the state should refrain from adopting explicit regulations with respect to it. However, nationality cannot be separated from politics in the same way as religion. Due to functional reasons – clearly spelled out by the historical and sociological approaches to the connection between modernization and nation building⁴⁴ –, modern political life is bound to acquire a national dimension, contrary to the legitimating self-image of liberal democratic regimes. Members of the majority are unavoidably favored by comparison to those of the national minorities by the very fact that their language is the official language and their particular culture is erected to a dominating position within the state. Hence, the liberal commitment to the equal treatment of the individuals is not respected. In order to rule out this asymmetric treatment of the citizens and to make liberal states true to their philosophical commitments, the privileges enjoyed by the majorities have to be balanced with the help of specific collective rights granted to national minorities.

One further implication of this stance is that the body of citizenship – the traditional focus, as shown above, of the civic conception of the nation – could be reconstructed on stronger foundations once its fragmentation along cultural dividing lines has been acknowledged and given constitutional recognition.⁴⁵ Liberal multiculturalists also argue that policies based on the standard conception of the civic nation are led to take

⁴⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990 [1983]; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, sec. ed., London, Verso, 1991; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, sec. ed., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993.

⁴⁵ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, pp. 173-192.

(illiberal) nationalist forms while continuing to invoke impeccable liberal credentials.⁴⁶ For sure, no further pleading for implementing melting pot policies in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe can avoid offering a response to this argument.⁴⁷

8

Let us summarize. Some ideas are usually taken for granted when employing – or just invoking – the civic-ethnic distinction in political parlance and even in academic discourse. It is too often taken as a matter of fact that the ethnic model is a defining characteristic of the non-western world, being virtually absent in the West. It is generally considered that each national society is overwhelmingly dominated by one of the two types of national discourse, and thus they do not usually coexist, evenly balanced, within one and the same society. Most of those who subscribe to the civic-ethnic dichotomy think that, if properly interpreted, the civic nation can only be coextensive with the entire body of citizenship. As also that it can only be conceived as being forged exclusively with political building blocks, and as such that any intrusion of cultural determinants into its definition would amount to its distortion. Most often it is deemed that, no matter how useful it is for circumscribing the politically benign varieties of nationalism and distinguishing them from the harmful manifestations of ethnic politics, the civic model is to be seen as only the second-best alternative to no

⁴⁶ Idem, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁴⁷ Idem, "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe", in Will Kymlicka, Magda Opalski, eds., *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 13-106.

nationalism at all. Finally, most of the champions of the civic nation idea consider that it is able to offer a long-lasting resolution to the demands of national minorities, on the basis of individual rights and a universal conception of citizenship, and there is no need, as such, for collective rights and positive discriminatory policies in order to attain the goals of a right approach to the dilemmas of multicultural citizenship.

We argued that all these statements might not necessarily go like that. It may happen – and it is a problem to be discussed – that both varieties of nationalist discourse can and did frequently feature in western, as well as in eastern societies. It is most probable – and it is a question to be examined – that they can and do frequently coexist within the same polities, succeeding each other as dominating ideological voices and as major factors influencing the unfolding of underlying political cultures. It is reasonable to argue that, in most cases, it is impossible to make the body of citizenship coterminous with the national group, while it is still possible to persuade the national group to embrace a “civic” – that is, a “subjective” or “inclusionary” – conception of the nation. It is unreasonable to maintain that adopting such an inclusionary view of the nation requires dropping out all cultural determinants from its definition. It is a topic of debate whether the civic nation is a contingent element of liberal democracy or it is a constitutive component of its normative foundations. And it has to be discussed whether collective rights are not required, in many cases, as a constitutional device appropriate for tackling the compounded problems of multiculturalism.

We started by suggesting that the distinctions we make are useful for dispelling some of the confusions arising recurrently in the debates about citizenship, minorities and national conflicts in post-communist

Eastern Europe. It is in order, therefore, to spell out in some detail the practical implications of the theoretical statements made above.

One might be puzzled especially by the first, second and fifth points. The first two of them look very much like some “soft” – and for that matter somewhat perverse – expressions of ideas coming dangerously close to an indigenist or anti-western stance. It might seem that they might offer an ideological support for questioning advocacies and policies meant to uproot those characteristics of East European political culture that have traditionally hindered the entrenchment of liberal democracy in the region, thus opposing designs for reform and defending the nationalist *status quo*. The last one looks like an even more dangerous attempt to “rehabilitate” the nation state, in a region where no sustained attempt to put it into question has ever taken place.⁴⁸

Contrary to such possible fears, it is not the intention of the present paper either to disregard those entrenched features of non-western political cultures that have manifested themselves over time as hostile to democratization, or to prevent a critical inquiry of the nation state model. The goal is to argue that, in order to act as effective forces, ideas have to sound convincing, after having been examined from all relevant standpoints. In the light of recent historical research, the distinction between the civic and the ethnic conceptions of the nation has come to appear unconvincing, as long as it is predicated on a rigid West-East dichotomy, and on a sharp separation between civic-minded and ethnic-minded political cultures. In the same way, we incline to give credit to the liberal nationalist pleading for taking

⁴⁸ John Dunn, ed., *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

the idea of the nation seriously, accepting that it has genuine relevance for political philosophy.

The third, fourth and sixth of the preceding distinctions emerge, however, as still more significant for taking a right view on the predicament of the national question in Eastern Europe. Too often, this last one has been depicted as determined, over the long run of history, by the virtually unchallenged ascendancy of the ethnic vision over its rival in all the countries of the region. In fact, a combination between the predominance of ethnic nationalism at the grass-roots level of local societies and repeated misconceived attempts to impose from the top policies of homogenization nourished and sustained by the idea of the civic nation might be a more accurate description of the actual course that the process of nation building has followed here. In an area with shifting political borders, where national identities could not be forged, as in the West, within the resilient frameworks of strong dynastic states,⁴⁹ political regimes competing for westernizer credentials have repeatedly attempted to pattern the emerging national states on the melting pot model inspired primarily by the French example, also trying to infuse the citizenries with a sense of belonging to “political nations” and to relegate mere “ethnic identities” to the sphere of private life. For sure, liberal-minded intellectuals have often criticized local governments for not being willing to put into practice whole-heartedly the principles of the civic nation. Such criticisms, however, could only support the standard governmental stance of hailing minorities as “tribalist”

⁴⁹ Peter F. Sugar, Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle, The University of Washington Press, 1969; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans”, in *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of Southeastern Europe*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994, pp. 149-192.

defenders of ethnic nationalism each time they voiced demands about corporative recognition and collective rights. Such accusations have occurred, as a matter of fact, each time minorities claimed to be considered as parts of neighboring state-nations, instead of complying to present themselves as “ethnic groups” within their own states. Before 1919, “ethnic” Romanians in Dualistic Hungary were thus expected to conceive of themselves as members of the Hungarian “political nation”. After 1919, “ethnic” Hungarians have been expected in the same way to merge into the Romanian “political nation”. The same expectations have been voiced all throughout the region, whether with respect to the Turks of Bulgaria, to the Hungarians of Slovakia or to the Russian inhabitants of the Baltic countries.

It seems only reasonable to admit that, in Eastern Europe, nations forged as cultural-linguistic entities and spread across (always fluid) political borders have come to intermingle with each other as fully formed collective identities,⁵⁰ not content of defining themselves as mere ethnic groups when holding the status of minorities. National identities have not been cemented over centuries within firmly established boundaries. As boundaries were frequently modified by territorial settlements, it often happened that segments of previously dominant nations found themselves overnight living as minority groups.⁵¹ The French (political) identity of the Alsacians was

⁵⁰ Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: a Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, transl. by Ben Fowkes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985; Idem, “From National Revival to the Fully Formed Nation: the Nation Building Process in Europe”, in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, Verso, 1996, pp. 78-97.

⁵¹ Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*, Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 1980; Raymond Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1983.

created over a long period of time. With a hindsight, it emerges that one could have only unreasonably expected the Turkish inhabitants of Bulgaria after 1878 to define their links to the Bulgarian state on the Alsacian pattern. After the settlement of 1867, it was already too late for the Hungarian state to repeat on an accelerated pace the French experiment of nation building and to be successful in persuading the Romanians to consider themselves as just an ethnic group, part of the Hungarian nation defined in civic terms.⁵² After 1918, and again after 1989, it has not been a realistic expectation from the part of the Romanian state that the Hungarians would start to think of themselves as nothing more than a part of the Romanian political nation. We have to accept that, in Eastern Europe, a national group can inhabit several states, and a citizenry can be composed of representatives of various nations. It is a matter of words, but words can make a great difference. This is not to deny the relevance of the civic-ethnic distinction, or to rehabilitate ethnic nationalism. It is only to admit that, in order to be effective, ideas have to be adapted to circumstances.

In order to act effectively in Eastern Europe, the idea of the civic nation has to be interpreted not as a demand to experiment the model of the “melting-pot”, but as a struggle on two fronts. On the one hand, people have to be persuaded to think about their national groups as inclusionary and defined in “subjective” terms. On the

⁵² For a somewhat too enthusiastic description of pre-1918 Hungary as a melting pot society see Karen Barkey, “Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: a Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century”, *East European Politics and Societies* 14: 3, 2000, pp. 497-531. For a critique of contemporary melting pot policies also applicable to past experiments of the kind see Janos Kis, “Beyond the Nation State”, *Social Research* 63: 1, 1995, pp. 191-215.

other hand, governments have to be persuaded to accept that, in the region, states can and do often comprise several nations, and that some of these nations have links with neighboring states. To put it in other words, as a general rule a state in the region cannot be conterminous with a civic nation, but only with an aggregate of “civic nations” (or fragments of them). A realistic agenda for accommodating cultural diversity can only be drawn on the basis of disseminating a clear consciousness of these realities at all levels of the public discourse.⁵³

⁵³ Michael Johns, “Do As I Say, Not As I Do’: the European Union, Eastern Europe and Minority Rights”, *East European Politics and Societies* 17: 4, 2003, pp. 682-699.

Part II
Modernization and Sociologies of the Elites

4. A Divide over the Oligarchy: Competing Uses of Marxism in Pre-communist Romania

The theoretical controversies accompanying the split between social-democracy and communism in interwar Romania revolved around an issue that marked them off from ideological debates of the same sort taking place elsewhere in Europe at the time. According to the communists, social-democratic reluctance in truly embracing the interests of the working class had been rationalized with the help of an intellectual construction that unnecessarily revised Marxist sociological categories. Socialists maintained that one key difference between the Romanian social landscape and that of the developed capitalist-industrial West was the conflicting relationship between two wings of the dominant class. The first was nothing else but the capitalist bourgeoisie, which standard Marxist wisdom indicated as the archenemy of proletarian emancipation. In the Romanian setting, however, this social group was to be treated by the Left as a progressive force and a temporary ally against the nebulous social entity of a non-capitalist – and yet non-feudal – “oligarchy”, that was to be struggled against first. Tracing the origins and content of that notion enables us

Previous version in *Pontes: Review of South-East European Studies* 3-4, 2006-2007, pp 155-169. A version delivered at the conference “The Hour of Romania”, organized by Indiana University and the Romanian Cultural Institute and held at Bloomington, Indiana on March 22-26, 2007. Another version delivered at the conference “Comparative History: Theory and Practice”, organized by the State University of Moldova and the History Department of the Central European University in Budapest and held at Kishinev on June 1, 2007.

to disclose the surprising ways in which Marxism had been fused, in the preceding decades, with various strands of the surrounding cultural space and to make a brief analytical inventory of the main ideological uses of Marxism in pre-communist Romania. To the same extent, tracing the posterity of the communists' depiction of the notion of "oligarchy" as a theoretical heresy – and not as a meaningful intellectual tool required for making sense of Romanian social peculiarities – reveals the larger cultural consequences of what could otherwise be considered as a minor ideological squabble of the late 1930's.

1

The departure of the Komintern branch of Marxism from the fold of social-democracy took place, in Romania, in 1921, following soon after the foundation of the Third International in 1919.¹ Outlawed in 1924, the Communist Party was to reemerge as a legal political organization only after August 23, 1944. By the time it went into underground activities, left-wing political mobilization, quite significant in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, had already decreased in intensity.² The most important consequence of that surge of activism, raised by the revolutionary tide which had seemed, for a short while, to engulf Central Europe and fulfill the Leninist-Trotskyist design of an international communist upheaval, was the emergence of radical Right, partly as a reaction to the threat of Bolshevik

¹ George Lichtheim, "Social-democracy and Communism, 1918-1968", *Studies in Comparative Communism* 3: 1, 1970, pp. 5-30.

² Lucien Karchmar, "Communism in Romania, 1918-1921", in Ivo Banac, ed., *The Effects of World War I. The Class War after the Great War: the Rise of Communist Parties in East Central Europe 1918-1921*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1983, pp. 127-187.

contamination.³ An important stream of political contestation against the establishment was to be cast, during the interwar years, in the guise of fascism.⁴ As to the establishment itself, its two main components were the National Liberal Party – with distant historical origins, emerging consolidated from the war, enjoying uninterrupted tenures in power in 1922-1926 and 1933-1937 and dedicated to modernization from above by the means of interventionist economic policies – and the political forces grouped, after 1930, around king Carol II, which gave a further twist to the well-entrenched Romanian authoritarian liberalism, borrowing heavily from corporatism while at the same time keeping a hostile eye on the growing and noisy fascist revolution of the Iron Guard.⁵ The only embodiment of the Left which became politically effective was the National-Peasant

³ Francis L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1967; Irina Livezeanu, "Fascists and Conservatives in Romania: Two Generations of Nationalists", in Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 218-239.

⁴ Eugen Weber, "The Men of the Archangel", *Journal of Contemporary History* 1: 1, 1966, pp. 101-126; Armin Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*. *Mișcare socială și organizație politică*, trad. de Cornelia și Delia Eșianu, București, Humanitas, 1999.

⁵ Andrew C. Janos, "The One-party State and Social Mobilization: East Europe between the Wars", in Samuel P. Huntington, Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: the Dynamics of Established One-Party Systems*, New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1970, pp. 204-236; Idem, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: the Case of Romania", in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 72-116; Paul A. Shapiro, "Romania's Past as Challenge for the Future: a Developmental Approach to Interwar Politics", in Daniel N. Nelson, ed., *Romania in the 1980's*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1981, pp. 17-67.

Party, in power for most of the years 1928-1933.⁶ Neither clandestine communism nor legal social-democracy were able, all throughout those years, to raise a powerful popular support.⁷ Most often, this fact is taken to imply that studying pre-communist Romanian Marxism can only have a limited relevance for gaining a broader understanding of pre-communist Romania.⁸ The present article does not subscribe to such a view.⁹

No social and political theory of communism gained currency, in Romania, over the interwar period. Accordingly, the theoretical clarification of the disagreements between social-democracy and communism had to wait until 1944-1945, when the theorist Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu delineated, in a series of works partly elaborated in the previous years, the ideological worldview of international communism as it related to Romanian realities. As to his party's relationship with the local socialists at the level of doctrine, the ideological statement of Pătrășcanu made it to cling on a highly nebulous idea which does not immediately disclose its connections with

⁶ Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951], pp. 130-169; Z. Ornea, *Țărănismul. Studiu sociologic*, București, Editura Politică, 1969.

⁷ Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 243-258.

⁸ Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Romania, 1944-1962*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1964; Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: a Political History of Romanian Communism*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 2003; Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lui Tanti Varvara. Istorii clandestine*, București, Humanitas, 2005.

⁹ The present paper largely summarizes the arguments developed in Victor Rădescu, "Populismul și celelalte marxisme românești", in *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, ed. a II-a, București, Pro Universitaria, 2020, pp. 233-305. Broad perspectives on Marxist social thought in Romania can be found in Roberts, *Rumania*; Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996; Henri H. Stahl, *Gânditori și curente de istorie socială românească*, ed. de Paul H. Stahl, București, Editura Universității din București, 2001.

the urgencies of practical politics: for the communist, the edge stone of theoretical divergence between the two Romanian branches of Marxism was constituted by their different stances taken to the notion of a local ruling “oligarchy”. Socialists maintained that, in order to act in accordance with the long-term Marxist revolutionary designs, local political forces that defended the interests of the working class had to take a temporary alliance with the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie against a social class which, for the time being, controlled the levers of Romanian politics and exercised a powerful domination over the whole society: described as the “oligarchy”, this non-capitalistic class was even less of a surviving landholding ruling stratum. In fact, any attempt to describe it in terms of standard Marxist sociological categories was doomed to a failure, as it was part of a social reality that had not been envisaged by Marx when elaborating his theory of historical evolution. This social reality, of which the “oligarchy” was a central tenet, had to be explained, no doubt, in Marxist terms, but such an accomplishment required a flexible and innovative use of Marxist sociology. For Pătrășcanu, such claims could only hide the intention of social-democrats to collaborate with a part of the ruling exploiter class and to indefinitely postpone, as such, the proletarian revolution.¹⁰

The idea incriminated by Pătrășcanu as a theoretical heresy had not appeared as an innovation of the interwar period, being firmly rooted, instead, in the long-term evolution of Marxist theorizing in the Romanian context. Far from being formulated as a response to a particular constellation of challenges coming from the recent past, it stood as the very cornerstone of the political identity of Romanian social-democracy. Before marking the dividing line stretching

¹⁰ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Problemele de bază ale României*, București, Socec & Co, 1944, pp. 257-258.

through the interwar Left, it was shaped in the context of another debate between two different interpretations of Marxism, taking place before the First World War. Moreover, at that time, the school of thought dubbed by Pătrășcanu as a traitor of Marxist orthodoxy stood as the very guardian of the same orthodoxy. From the 1880's to the 1910's, Romanian socialism had to argue its right to exist and activate on the local soil not only against the mainstream political tendencies of liberalism, conservatism and traditionalist nationalism, but also facing the populist argument related to the inutility of promoting proletarian emancipation in the setting of agrarian backwardness.¹¹ The last challenge was the more powerful as it was expressed itself in the language of the Left, claiming to offer a correct interpretation of Marxism in relation to the Romanian predicament.¹²

2

As in Russia and the other countries of East Central Europe, agrarian populism developed in Romania through a constant dialogue with European and local Marxism and eventually saw itself as an authorized translation of the same ideological tradition as to make it resonate with the real economic, social and political urgencies which confronted the underdeveloped periphery of Europe.¹³ Rejecting the all-encompassing

¹¹ Michael Kitch, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 55: 1, 1977, pp. 65-89; Z. Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, București, Cartea Românească, 1983.

¹² Z. Ornea, *Poporanismul*, București, Minerva, 1972; Michael Kitch, "Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53: 131, 1975, pp. 248-271.

¹³ David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: a Study in Social Dogmatism*, New York, Collier Books, 1961 [1951]; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of*

Marxist philosophy of history and strict determinism tightened within the positivist-based orthodoxy of the age,¹⁴ the populists saw Marx as a sociologist of capitalist society, whose close reading offered strong arguments precisely to the extent that his predictions about the evolution of all societies through the same stages of evolution – from the primitive, ancient and feudal, through the capitalist, to the socialist – could not be sustained. Having no access to external markets that had been captured by the dynamic economies of the West and being confined to internal markets composed overwhelmingly of poor peasant consumers, industrial capitalism could not take hold in the countries of the East by the means of the free play of economic mechanisms. If promoted through the instruments of state intervention, it could only expand peasant misery, as the mass of the population had to bear the fiscal burdens of protectionist policies. Relying on a philosophic voluntarism which made heavy use of late XIXth-century neo-Kantianism,¹⁵ most of the East European populists drew, from this analysis of the facts, the conclusion that government-sponsored industrialization had to be stopped in order for their societies to be able to move

the Russian Populists, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1969].

¹⁴ Georges Haupt, *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986; Dick Geary, "The Second International: Socialism and Social Democracy", in Terence Ball, Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 219-238.

¹⁵ Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism*, pp. 29-131; H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: the Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1958, pp. 183-191; Melissa Lane, "Positivism: Reactions and Developments", in Terence Ball, Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 321-342.

from the traditional agrarian world to the stage of socialism, by skipping the intermediate stage of capitalism.

In the case of the Russian and several other national varieties of populism, such a confidence in the virtues of agrarian backwardness – which was deemed to offer a shortcut to socialism by avoiding the horrors of capitalism – drew insights from local ideological traditions cast in the mold of traditionalist nationalism. The Slavic communal village of the *obshchina* – considered by various Slavophiles of the region as a repository of the values and ways of life characteristic to the indigenous organic community, as against the western-induced individualistic society¹⁶ – was seen by the populists as a privileged springboard to the world of socialism. That is, dissociating the idea of the *obshchina* from the regressive utopia of traditionalism, they associated it with the image of a new era of social harmony placed in the future. For some time, and especially in Russia, populism adopted the mood of revolutionary terrorism. After the debacle of the “Go to the People” movement in 1875-1876 and the assassination of tsar Alexander II in 1881,¹⁷ it evolved, however, towards a reformist stance best exhibited in the works of the social and economic analysts V. P. Vorontsov and N. Danielson, who employed Marxist economics in order to argue for a peaceful transition to a peasant-dominated socialism, by capitalizing on the

¹⁶ Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective: Populism, Nationalism and Industrialization*, sec. ed., London, Routledge, 1989, pp. 145-153; Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-century Russian Thought*, transl. by Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka, Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1975].

¹⁷ Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: a History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, transl. by Francis Haskell, rev. ed., London, Phoenix Press, 2001 [1960], pp. 709-720.

socialist elements already present in the texture of Russian agrarian world.¹⁸ In this new guise, Russian populism stood as the eastern counterpart of the western Marxist revisionism centered upon the figure of Eduard Bernstein, which argued, much in the same manner and also dissociating itself from deterministic thinking, that, as Marxist predictions about growing income disparities and greater strains put on the capitalist economy by periodic crises of overproduction were not being fulfilled, the industrial working classes of advanced societies had to satisfy their demands by the means of trade-union activism and parliamentary pressures.¹⁹

Romanian agrarian society after the reform of 1864 contained fewer elements of ancient peasant communalism than post-1861 Russia or post-Ottoman Serbia and Bulgaria.²⁰ This was one reason why the Romanian branch of Marxist agrarian populism – whose main spokesman was the Bessarabian émigré Constantin Stere, settled in Romania in 1892 after an apprenticeship in the Russian *narodnik* movement and a detention in Siberia²¹ – went even farther than either Bernstein or the Russian populists on the same path of revisionism. While formulating his own argument about the impossibility of

¹⁸ Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia: Legal Marxism and Legal Populism*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1961. Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism*.

¹⁹ Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1952; George Lichtheim, *Marxism: a Historical and Critical Study*, sec. ed., New York, Praeger, 1965, pp. 278-300.

²⁰ Jerome Blum, "The Rise of Serfdom in Eastern Europe", *The American Historical Review* 62: 4, 1957, pp. 807-836; Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: the Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York, Academic Press, 1976. See also Maria Todorova, "Myth-making in European Family History: the *Zadruga* Revisited", *East European Politics and Societies* 4: 1, 1990, pp. 30-76.

²¹ Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere*, București, Cartea Românească, vols. 1-2, 1989, 1991.

industrial development in Romania on the pattern set by Vorontsov and Danielson and backing it with the authority of Marx and Marxist science, he completely abandoned the design of a socialist revolution, replacing it with that of an “agrarian democracy”: a political arrangement enabling the overwhelming peasant majority to enjoy the rewards of its predominance in the economic process, after being liberated from the burdens of futile and misled attempts at industrial modernization and given a decisive say in public life.

In the same way as the economic and sociological theory of eastern populism stood as the counterpart of western Marxist revisionism, so the re-statements of Marxist orthodoxy against revisionist challenges followed a pattern widely spread across the political borders of the time. Best represented by the German Karl Kautsky and the Russian Gheorgi Plekhanov, this branch of late XIXth and early XXth century Marxist thinking set out to defend the deterministic conception of historical materialism, maintaining that all societies were bound to pass through the same developmental sequence of stages, culminating with the advent of socialism. The socialist revolution, issuing from the inherent contradictions of capitalism, was once again asserted as the inevitable consequence of historical laws, in the countries of advanced economic and social evolution as well as in those of retarded modernization.²² In Russia and Eastern Europe, however, this renewed belief in historical inevitability implied a further argument, related to the unavoidable replacement of the social and economic arrangements of agrarian traditionalism with those of

²² Lichtheim, *Marxism*, pp. 259-277; Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: the Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995, pp. 208-227; Geary, “The Second International”.

industrial capitalism. While predicating the inescapable character of the socialist revolution, both Kautsky and Plekhanov emphasized their conviction that the event able to open the gates of socialism could only take place against the background of a fully developed capitalist social order, only after capitalism itself had passed through the full cycle of its inherent crises, and moreover only after the socialist movement had become able to mobilize in its favor a widespread popular support. Accordingly, rejecting the populist wisdom about the dispensable character of capitalism as an intermediate link between the agrarian society and socialism, and collecting proofs to the extent that capitalist economy had already penetrated Russian society to such a degree as to make a sham of any dream about preserving intact the institutions of village communalism, Plekhanov never wavered in his belief that, if accomplished prematurely, a Russian socialist revolution would lead to a renewed Oriental despotism. Half a century later, Karl Wittfogel was to rediscover and take over the same thread of thinking, which associated the analysis of ancient Middle East “hydraulic societies” with that of Soviet totalitarianism.²³

As populist reformism, so Kautskyan-Plekhanovist Marxism had a Romanian embodiment. In fact, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the founder of this ideological trend – born in Ukraine under the name of Salomon Katz, precociously immersed in revolutionary activities and taking refuge in Romania already in 1875, at the heyday of Russian populism²⁴ – evolved towards

²³ Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: a Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957; Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: the Father of Russian Marxism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963.

²⁴ Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, București, Compania, 2006 [1982].

such a stance not under the influence of Plekhanov, but in an independent fashion. His first significant articles with such a bent – “Karl Marx and Our Economists”²⁵ and “What Do the Romanian Socialists Want?”²⁶ – appeared in 1884-1886, while in 1893, when Stere for the first time exposed the rudiments of a populist argument in the series of articles “From the Notes of a Hypochondric Spectator”,²⁷ Gherea was already the intellectual animator of a socialist party with a Plekhanovist orientation, founded in the same year and affiliated to the Second International, itself functioning since 1889.²⁸ The Social Democratic Party of Romanian Workers exhibited from the very beginning the shortcomings of any political organization addressing the urban proletariat in an overwhelmingly agrarian country. A large part of its constituency – including Stere, a fellow-traveler that had never concealed his dissident views – left it in 1899 for the liberal camp, intent on pushing the most progressive ruling party on the path of social reform.²⁹ Up to 1910, when a Social Democratic Party was reconstituted, the socialists Gherea and Christian Rakovski – an international revolutionary born in Bulgaria, who was to join the leadership of the

²⁵ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Karl Marx și economiștii noștri” [1884], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 1, 1976, pp. 40-164.

²⁶ Idem, “Ce vor socialiștii români? Expunerea socialismului științific și programul socialist” [1886], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 2, 1976, pp. 7-126.

²⁷ C. Stere, “Din notițele unui observator ipocondric (un foileton social)” [1893], in *Scrieri politice și filozofice*, ed. de Victor Rizescu, București, Dominor, 2005, pp. 129-167.

²⁸ Constantin-Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul în România*, București, Editura Fundației Social-Democrate “Constantin-Titel Petrescu”, 2003 [1944]; Z. Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul*, București, Minerva, 1977.

²⁹ Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere*, vol. 1, pp. 236-275.

Bolshevik Revolution after 1917³⁰ – and the populists Stere and Garabet Ibrăileanu went on with their polemical exchanges, which reached a climax in the immediate aftermath of the great peasant revolt of 1907. Stere's series of articles "Social-democracy or populism?" of 1907-1908³¹ led Gherea to elaborate and expose at great length the tenets of his own doctrine. As contained primarily in the two articles "A short response to a short review"³² and "Post-script or forgotten words"³³ of 1908, in the comprehensive book *Neoserfdom* of 1910³⁴ and in the text of 1911 entitled "On Socialism in Backward Countries", published as an after-word to a translation of Kautsky's *The Foundations of Social-democracy*,³⁵ this doctrine made clear that, waiting for the spark of revolution to come from the developed West, Romanian socialists were confined, for the time being, to the paradoxical role of working for the development and maturation of local capitalism. As the populist Marxism of Stere, convinced of the impossibility of propelling Romania on the path of capitalism, dropped out the idea of a socialist revolution in order to adopt that of the

³⁰ Francis Conte, *Christian Rakovski, 1873-1941: a Political Biography*, transl. by A. P. M. Bradley, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1989.

³¹ C. Stere, "Social-democratism sau poporanism?" [1907-1908], in *Scriseri politice și filozofice*, ed. de Victor Rizescu, București, Dominor, 2005, pp. 169-353.

³² Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Un mic răspuns la o mică recenzie" [1908], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 3, 1977, pp. 454-466.

³³ Idem, "Post-scriptum sau cuvinte uitate" [1908], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 3, 1977, pp. 476-504.

³⁴ Idem, "Neioiobăgia" [1910], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 4, 1977.

³⁵ Idem, "Asupra socialismului în țările înapoiate" [1911], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 43-75.

“peasant democracy”, so the socialist Marxism of Gherea, taking account of the low level reached by capitalism development in Romania, put into brackets the revolutionary design for an indefinite time, concentrating instead on the urgent task of capitalist modernization.³⁶

3

Actually, what both Stere and Gherea reproached to local capitalism was not its mere feebleness, but its non-authentic character. It was at this point that the two thinkers of the Left and their associates joined a stream of social criticism with a long pedigree, originated in the 1860's within the ideological camp of conservatism and later broadened by the school of traditionalist nationalism. Although an invention of the Right, the analysis of Romanian society in terms of the disjunction between the western-imported institutional and ideological “forms” and the local economic, social and cultural “substance” fit well with the Marxist approach to social reality in terms of the relationship between “base” and “superstructure”. For this reason, the encounter between international Marxism and the Romanian currents of thought coming from the conservative Titu Maiorescu³⁷ and the nationalist Mihai Eminescu³⁸ led to reciprocal influences and eventually to their fusion into a “critical culture” underlying the whole ideological spectrum of the time. While local social criticism leveled against the shortcomings of imitative modernization emerged more sophisticated from this dialogue with the

³⁶ See also Cristian Rakovski, „Poporanism, socialism și realitate” [1908], in *Scrieri social-politice*, ed. de Ion Iacoș, București, Editura Politică, 1977, pp. 140-184.

³⁷ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1975.

³⁸ Idem, *Sămănătorismul*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998 [1970].

Marxist tradition, so the latter one was largely transformed, in the Romanian setting, into a kind of sociology of modernization, which was more concerned with the short-term prospects of indigenous capitalism than with the long-term chances of a socialist revolution.³⁹ As to the prevailing characteristics of local society, they were placed by Gherea under the general label of “neoserfdom”, a peculiar combination of feudal and capitalist elements which brought together the faults of both systems with none of their benefits. As long as such social arrangements were in place, Gherea considered, capitalist development could not proceed farther. As the self-professed “bourgeois” elite of Romania – structured around the National Liberal Party – was not interested in promoting genuine capitalist modernization, having a stake in maintaining the existing situation, it was the task of the socialist Left to militate for the cause of “authenticity” in the field of economic structures and social relationships.

It was at this juncture that the notion of “oligarchy” became a central pillar of Romanian socialism’s ideology. Alongside the analysis of agrarian economy in terms of “neoserfdom”, Gherea started to conceptualize the dynamics of elite formation in Romania in terms of the competing relationship between the declining landholding class and a rising social category defined not by its control over the means of production and its function in the economic process, but by its privileged connection with the state apparatus. Although not an economic interest group – and as such not a “class” according to the proper Marxist definition of this notion – the category

³⁹ David Harrison, *The Sociology of Modernization and Development*, London, Routledge, 1988; Charles K. Wilber, Kenneth P. Jameson, eds., *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, fifth. ed., New York, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994.

of bureaucrats had acquired a consciousness of itself that made it to act as a virtual class in Romanian society. A product of the “political industry”, it also managed to establish its control over the state-driven economic mechanisms which functioned to its sole benefit. Most often confused with a “bourgeoisie”, due to the *tiers état* origins of its rank and file and even of its leaders, it was the perfect opposite of a genuine entrepreneurial middle class, its very existence – like that of the neo-feudal agrarian relationships – having the result of impeding the further evolution of capitalism. As long as both the remnants of feudalism and the all-powerful oligarchy were not demolished, Romania’s advancement towards socialism through the entering gate of a genuine capitalism was prevented and local society was evolving on another path of development than western societies, over the course of which there appeared phenomena with no counterpart in the record of western history.

Anticipated in a sub-chapter of *Neoserfdom*,⁴⁰ Gherea’s theory of the “oligarchy” was intended by him to stay at the center of another book, meant to broaden the analysis of Romanian agrarian peculiarities into an overall characterization of the country’s social structure. The project was not fulfilled, and the fragments preserved – elaborated during the 1910’s – were published posthumously in 1920 and 1930 as a series of articles, later to be brought together by Gherea’s editors under the general title “On the Romanian Oligarchy”.⁴¹ By the time Gherea was engaged in this enterprise, however, the socialist depiction of the “oligarchy” as a component of the syndrome of retarded modernization was only one of

⁴⁰ Gherea, “Neoiobăgia”, pp. 127-131.

⁴¹ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “[Despre oligarhia română]” [1914, 1920, 1930], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 176-231.

many available, coming from all ideological families. In fact, the idea in question was part and parcel of the mode of thinking articulated around the discourse on the “forms without substance” and made its appearance much at the same time as the latter, in the conservative and nationalist thinking of the 1870’s. In the parliamentary speeches of Titu Maiorescu⁴² and Petre P. Carp⁴³ and in the essays of Theodor Rosetti⁴⁴ and I. L. Caragiale,⁴⁵ Romanian society was described as left – with the gradual decline of the boyar nobility – at the hands of a parasitic class of state functionaries prone to avoid the risks of economic entrepreneurship, living on the spoils of the state and able to use the state levers as a means for squeezing out the economically productive classes of a disproportionately large amount of income, itself put to no other use but the aping of elite lifestyles prevalent in western metropolitan cities. In the stream of political articles with a nationalist traditionalist bent coming from the pen of Mihai Eminescu, the same theory acquired the dimension of xenophobia, the “parasitic class” being denounced here as a cluster of ethnically mixed but non-Romanian profiteers of cosmopolitan modernization, spread over the body of indigenous peasantry from neighboring European societies.⁴⁶ The

⁴² Titu Maiorescu, “Asupra reformei legii pentru instrucțiunea publică” [1876], in *Discursuri parlamentare*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, vol. 1, 2001 [1897, 1915], pp. 229-253.

⁴³ P. P. Carp, *Discursuri parlamentare*, ed. de Marcel Duță, București, Grai și Suflet, 2000.

⁴⁴ Theodor Rosetti, “Despre direcțiunea progresului nostru” [1874], in Eugen Lovinescu, coord., *Antologia ideologiei junimiste*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1942, pp. 117-162.

⁴⁵ I. L. Caragiale, “Politică și cultură” [1896], in *Publicistică și corespondență*, ed. de Marcel Duță, București, Grai și Suflet, 1999, pp. 98-104.

⁴⁶ Dumitru Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, ed. de Oliviu Tocaciu, București, Pacifica, 1994 [1932].

anti-Semitic doctrinaire A.C. Cuza took over the same idea in its Eminescian formulation, making of it the cornerstone of his own political doctrine.⁴⁷ On the Left, Stere subscribed to the same way of thinking already in the 1890's,⁴⁸ while at the turn of the century the socialist dissenters H. Sanielevici and Ștefan Antim took the bureaucratic oligarchy, self-proclaimed as "bourgeois" and centered upon the National Liberal Party, as the main target of criticism in their advocacy for free trade liberalism.⁴⁹ Still, the most forceful exposition of the same theory at the moment Gherea offered his own elaboration of it came from the conservative Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, whose 1904 book entitled *Romanian Culture and Politics for the Sake of Politics* contains a masterful description of the self-perpetuating Romanian political industry.⁵⁰

4

The thread of critical sociology so far surveyed continued to unfold in the interwar period. However, the early 1920's brought a revolutionizing novelty which completely changed the pattern of intellectual life. In the pre-war period no vocal advocacy in favor of the status-quo had existed, and accordingly the various schools of social criticism offered their competing models of development while agreeing in the main on the sociological understanding of the syndrome of backwardness and on the neo-feudal and bureaucratic falsification of capitalism in the Romanian setting. Now, any

⁴⁷ A. C. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente*, Iași, n. p., 1895.

⁴⁸ Stere, "Din notițele unui observator ipocondric".

⁴⁹ H. Sanielevici, *Încercări critice*, București, Carol Göbl, 1903; Ștefan Antim, *Chestiunea socială în România*, București, Imprimeria "La Roumanie", 1908.

⁵⁰ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "Cultura română și politicianismul" [1904], in *Personalismul energetic și alte scrieri*, ed. de Gh. Al. Cazan și Gheorghe Pienescu, București, Editura Eminescu, 1984. pp. 1-104.

such ideological attack on the modernizing establishment had to confront the sociological apologetics of the existing order and ideological counter-attack against the entire welter of anti-oligarchic social criticism offered by Ștefan Zeletin and Eugen Lovinescu. Zeletin's *The Romanian Bourgeoisie* – published in book format in 1925 but whose constituent parts started to appear in 1921⁵¹ – and Lovinescu's *History of Modern Romanian Civilization* – published in three volumes in 1924-1926⁵² – were lengthy pieces of historical sociology conceived as analyses of Romanian modernization and meant to offer a rationalization of the existing distribution of wealth and power, while at the same time rescuing the XIXth century liberal elite from the various accusations to which it had been exposed. They both presented the Romanian experience of occidentalization as a constant confrontation between the liberal politicians' sound intuition of realities and the cultural elites' incapacity to come to terms with the pace of change, accompanied by their attempt to escape from the iron cage of bourgeois modernity through the gates of traditionalist or progressive utopias.

Of the two rationalizations of authoritarian liberalism, the Zeletinian one is most striking for the theoretical underpinning it adopted. Reading Marx through the interpretation given by Rudolf Hilferding in his *Finance Capital*,⁵³ Zeletin drew from him arguments against the central statements of Romanian critical sociology, related to the distorted nature of local capitalist modernization. Instead of understanding this last one as consisting in a

⁵¹ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul său istoric*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Humanitas, 1991 [1925].

⁵² Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Minerva, vol. 1-3, 1992.

⁵³ Laurence Harris, "Finance Capital", in Tom Bottomore at al., eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 172-177.

deviation from the western path of development, he characterized it as simply a replica of a previous stage in the western economic and social evolution. It was by such means that, accepting the by then generally shared description of Romanian oligarchic system as valid, Zeletin justified its existence as a XIXth century re-embodiment on the periphery of Europe of those XVIIth and XVIIIth century institutional arrangements of monarchical absolutism which had enabled the most advanced states of the continent to pass through the first, mercantilist stage in the evolution of capitalism. Under the façade of liberal parliamentarianism adopted as an international requirement of civilized public life, Zeletin explained, Romanian society spontaneously developed precisely those political structures and interventionist economic practices that were likely to watch over the growth of an infant, “commercial” capitalism unable to sustain itself through the sheer forces of the market. While relying on Marx in order to argue that the much abused idea of the disjunction between forms and substance in Romania was just a conventional wisdom imposed by a deplorable dilettante sociology – as the modern institutional forms were indeed placed on the firm foundations of an economic capitalist substance belonging to the commercial and mercantilist variety – Zeletin also developed his interpretation of Marxism into the prediction that the fate of international economy was a gradual evolution towards socialism, to be accomplished from above, under the aegis of monopolistic, financial capitalism. Skipping the intermediate stage of free market liberalism – together with its liberal political counterpart – that western societies had briefly experienced in the Manchesterian era, Romania would leave behind the authoritarian-interventionist practices of the era of commercial capitalism only to rediscover them under a new guise, when embarking on the world-wide path of a renewed authoritarianism in accordance with the

requirements of financial capitalism. Placing the final advent of socialism in the distant and hardly foreseeable future, Zeletin allowed for the Romanian oligarchy of bureaucratic origins recently acceded to direct economic power through its control over the cartel of banking institutions obedient to the National Liberal Party a long era of undisturbed predominance.⁵⁴

Zeletin's appropriation of the Marxist legacy for building a defense of the *status quo* obliged him to deny the legitimacy of the other uses of Marxism influential at the time in the country. After having been employed by Stere for an advocacy in favor of political democracy based on a smallholder peasant economy and by Gherea as an intellectual instrument for rejecting the pseudo-capitalist practices of the Liberal oligarchy and demanding a wholesale adoption of capitalism preparing the ground for socialism, now the ideology of revolution was being domesticated by Zeletin as a reinforcement of oligarchic politics coupled with a state-driven industrializing economy. Whatever the practical implications of his teachings, Zeletin claimed, his reading of Marxism stood closer to the spirit of the debated doctrine than either the populist or the social-democratic interpretations. In fact, the origins of the last two schools' theoretical faults were to be searched for not in the international Marxist tradition, but in the indigenous intellectual environment – pervaded by the spirit of nostalgic traditionalism and fear of modernity – that had put its imprint on the local varieties of the Left. Together with the entire “critical culture”, Romania's self-proclaimed Marxists had unnecessarily revised the original doctrine as to make room for the idea that

⁵⁴ Ștefan Zeletin, “Neoliberalismul” [1926], in *Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Scripta, 1992 [1927], pp. 83-100.

societies could take various trajectories of modernization, themselves breeding specific social forms. Denying this, Zeletin emphasized the Marxist contention that the western capitalist and industrial breakthrough had shown, once and for all, the path that all societies were bound to take on the road to modernization. Connected to this, there was the related contention that no disjunction between forms and substance could be deemed to exist in Romania and in the countries of retarded modernization generally, as no instance of social change induced from top down could be revealed by the historical record. Believing that super-structural modernization could take ahead of the transformations in the sphere of economy and society, Gherea had falsified the spirit of Marxism which the prophet of oligarchic-induced socialism claimed to have recovered.

On the Left, the challenge posed by the new “modernist” sociology was picked up by the peasantist theorists Virgil Madgearu⁵⁵ and Gheorghe Zane⁵⁶ and the social-democrats Lotar Rădăceanu and Șerban Voinea. It was in the context of the latter two’s attempt to defend Gherism against the accusations leveled on it by Zeletin that the theory of the bureaucratic oligarchy was given its most sophisticated expression. It was also this final formulation of the theory which Pătrășcanu took as encapsulating the essence of socialist Marxist heterodoxy. Retrospectively, it appears as quite ironical that precisely such a pathetic attempt to reassert the identity of Marxism as the intellectual foundation of left-wing politics came to embody, for Pătrășcanu and his followers in the post-1945 Romanian scholarship, the

⁵⁵ Virgil Madgearu, *Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism*, ed. de Ludovic Bathory, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1999 [1936].

⁵⁶ Gheorghe Zane, “Burghezia română și marxismul”, *Viața românească* 19: 2, 1927, pp. 244-260; 19: 3, 1927, pp. 323-334.

deviationist nature of democratic socialism. Indeed, the interwar disciples of Gherea set out on their enterprise horrified by the fact that Marx could be made to speak as to present the hated *status quo* as the best of all possible worlds. Keen to dissociate Marxism from the semblance of establishment respectability insidiously bestowed on it by Zeletin, they offered complementary pleadings: the 1926 book *Oligarchic Marxism* authored by Voinea – the pen name of Gaston Boeue, a Frenchman with strong Romanian connections⁵⁷ – took a page by page critical reading of Zeletin's *The Romanian Bourgeoisie*, in order to prove it as an intellectual prestidigitation with no scientific value,⁵⁸ while Rădăceanu's series of articles "The Romanian Oligarchy", published between 1924 and 1927, developed at great length the theory of the non-capitalist and non-feudal ruling oligarchy, left unfinished by Gherea, taking pains to underline all the way Zeletin's errors on the same issues.⁵⁹ As to the side of critique, both authors denied that XIXth century Romanian economy could be described, in the Zeletinian fashion, as a variety of "commercial capitalism". Voinea simply negated any meaning to such a notion, maintaining that, while the mere circulation of capitals could be ascertained in all historical ages and was indeed ascertainable in Romanian lands long before the threshold of modernization, one could not speak properly about a local emergence of capitalism as long as such

⁵⁷ Paul H. Stahl, ed., *Șerban Voinea, 1894-1969. Contribution à l'histoire de la social-démocratie roumaine*, Paris, Sociétés Européennes, 1990.

⁵⁸ Șerban Voinea, *Marxism oligarhic. Contribuție la problema dezvoltării capitaliste a României*, București, Editura Brănișteanu, 1926.

⁵⁹ Lotar Rădăceanu, "Oligarhia română. Studiu asupra istoriei capitalismului în România", *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 5: 3-4, 1924, pp. 497-532; 6: 1-2, 1926, pp. 160-184; 6: 3-4, 1927, pp. 435-459.

capitals were not accumulated and put to work extensively in enterprises based on wage labor, something that even Zeletin had accepted that it was only barely starting to take place on a large scale in the predominantly agrarian Romanian economy. Rădăceanu, instead, explained that Romania's participation in the world market as an exporter of crops was not enough for transforming relationships of production at the local level in a capitalist fashion, but on the contrary induced the rise of a neo-feudal economy, as part of the syndrome of semi-colonialism. Once again, the sociological wisdom shared by social-democracy with the other currents of social criticism was reasserted: Romania had deviated from the western trajectory of development and it had to return on that path of evolution in order to get prepared for socialism. According to the new assessment given by the two socialists at the middle of the 1920's, in light of their polished and expanded Gherist theory, the prospects for a genuine capitalist development were somewhat brighter than in the near past: the oligarchy was still the dominant power in society, but a new entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, hostile to the bureaucratic-interventionist edifice, was gradually evolving. No matter how unnatural such a strategy might have appeared, there was no better choice for the socialist Left and its proletarian electorate but to take an alliance with those developing agents of capitalism, such as to jointly demolish their oligarchic common enemy and to liberate the forces of social evolution from the chains of distorted modernization.

Speaking in the name of social democratic Marxism, Rădăceanu and Voinea gave a renewed statement in favor of the entire critical sociology. Rejecting the theory of oligarchy as a mere tactical artifice of social democracy, meant to offer justifications for a politics of compromise, Pătrășcanu went on to deny the very notion of a plurality of modernization trajectories and context-bounded social formations. As contained in his two books *Basic Problems of Romania* of 1944⁶⁰ and *A Century of Social Unrest, 1821-1907* of 1945,⁶¹ Pătrășcanu's vision of social evolution on the agrarian periphery was even stricter than Zeletin's in terms of the contention that any attempt to alter Marx's view of social evolution as to make it cover the phenomena of underdevelopment could only lead not to an addition to the doctrine, but to its falsification. There was no sense in discussing about a distortion of capitalism into the arrangements of neo-serfdom, Pătrășcanu maintained, and neither in believing that the ruling class could be of another nature than either feudal or bourgeois. Since the middle of the XVIIIth century, when the peasant's dues towards the boyar landholder were largely converted from corveé into a tithe in kind and, later, in money, the Romanian lands went from the stage of feudal economy into that of the "economy of serfdom", described by Pătrășcanu as a mixture between elements of both feudalism and capitalism. Such a combination was not to be understood, however, in the fashion of Gherea, as a perverse fusion leading to a social system peculiar to retarded modernization, but simply as a juxtaposition between a decreasing traditionalist social segment and an expanding modern capitalist one, in

⁶⁰ Pătrășcanu, *Problemele de bază ale României*.

⁶¹ Idem, *Un veac de frământări sociale, 1821-1907*, București, Editura Politică, 1969 [1945].

which social relationships pertaining to both worlds could be found operating together. Romanian capitalism was in the XIXth century much more powerful than Gherea, Rădăceanu and Voinea wanted it to be, while no serious doubts could be raised about its “authenticity”. As for the interwar period, capitalism reigned supreme, and even displayed the classical symptoms of crisis and decadence preparing its inevitable downfall. Indeed, having to cope with the phenomenon of Romanian radical Right, Pătrășcanu managed to explain it, in his 1944 book *Under Three Dictatorships*, in light of the Marxist theory of fascism, as a creation of decadent monopolistic capitalism pressured by working class activism.⁶²

We should not be misled, however, into thinking that Pătrășcanu’s reversal from the Gherist sociological innovations into a rigid view of linear modernization meant a wholesale adoption of the deterministic ways of thinking characteristic to Second International orthodox Marxism. On the contrary, Pătrășcanu’s intellectual enterprise belonged together with the Leninist deviation from the very same orthodoxy.

After having participated, alongside Plekhanov, to the rejection of populism in the name of the inevitability and beneficial nature of capitalist development in Russia and joining in this way the argument of determinism against populist voluntarism, Lenin was soon to take a departure from Plekhanovism precisely by a half-way return to voluntarism. Assessing Russian capitalist development as unavoidable but nevertheless still in an incipient phase, Plekhanov placed the prospects of socialist revolution in a rather distant future, making them conditional upon the previous completion of a bourgeois-democratic revolution meant to wipe away the remnants of feudalism and the political structures of

⁶² Idem, *Sub trei dictaturi*, București, Editura Politică, 1970 [1944].

absolutism, preparing the ground for unhindered capitalist expansion and leading to the maturation of working class social consciousness and political involvement. Taking a leaf from the “Jacobin” or “Blanquist” stage in the evolution of Marx – consummated around 1848⁶³ – Lenin denounced Plekhanov’s reluctance in embracing the design of immediate revolution as cowardice, justifying his call for a precipitation of the stages of social transformation in light of a different assessment of the forces at work in Russian society at the time. If measured by the intensity and nature of class conflict it exhibited, Lenin maintained, Russian capitalism appeared as more advanced than Plekhanov allowed it to be, when looking to it from the standpoint of the level of development reached by the forces of production. Social tensions characteristic to the waning world of feudalism were juxtaposed, in Russia, with different ones of a truly capitalist nature. It was for this reason that, contrary to what Plekhanov thought, the bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions could be compressed into one single social and political upheaval, the proletariat and its intellectual vanguard being able to take part in various, but overlapping class alliances, concluded on the one side against the remnants of the old, feudal-absolutist regime and on the other side against the blossoming capitalist order, dragging as such to the grave both social-political structures at one stroke and cleaning the ground for socialism.⁶⁴

⁶³ Lichtheim, *Marxism*, pp. 51-62.

⁶⁴ John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, London, Longmans, 1954; Lichtcheim, “Social-democracy and Communism”; Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom*, pp. 269-302; Richard Pipes, *Communism: a History of the Intellectual and Political Movement*, London, Phoenix Press, 2002, pp. 21-52;

It was precisely this vision of overlapping fault-lines of class struggle, offered by Lenin as a projection into the future and a political program for precipitating socialist revolution in the midst of agrarian backwardness, which Pătrășcanu used as a heuristic tool for rounding up his understanding of Romanian past social development. Unlike the other analysts of Romanian modernization, he liked to underscore the importance of internal social dynamics as a factor of change, instead of making the transformations of local society primarily dependent on the exogenous factors of world capitalist expansion and acculturation. While abstaining from elaborating a prospective ideological justification for the Romanian proletarian revolution, he implicitly presented the Leninist revolutionary design as the logical conclusion of a long term pattern operating on the Romanian soil from the beginning of the XIXth century. Presenting the very different upheavals of 1821, 1848 and 1907 as instances of fully developed social revolutions, he read into them Lenin's conception that, given the presence of various types of social conflict in the same historical context, successive stages in the revolutionary process could be telescoped and, as such, the outcome of the entire process precipitated.

6

Unlike Lenin's rationalization for undemocratic revolutionary practices, Pătrășcanu's argument about the compression of revolutionary stages cannot be said to have played a significant role in the Romanian communist takeover. Otherwise, his rejection of the critical sociology's accumulated wisdom, which at some point had been made to cling on the idea of the non-capitalist "oligarchy", was doomed to have a greater posterity than his own abrupt fall from the top communist officialdom could have made us to believe.

His books have never become must-read pieces, either before or after his purge or, indeed, after his partial rehabilitation. Still, his polemic against the social-democrats of the 1920's has continued to influence our understanding of both social change and social thought in Romania. Of the heretic sociological views he rejected, some could be gradually rediscovered, as was the case with Gherea's analysis of neo-serfdom and of the top down evolution of capitalism in backward countries, impressively elaborated by Henri H. Stahl and eventually poured by him into the international debate of the 1970's on "peripheral modes of production".⁶⁵ However, neither Stahl or other sociologists, nor Z. Ornea or other historians of social thought could ever go beyond Pătrășcanu's denial of the conception of a bureaucratic oligarchy as a social category of its own, different from both the declining boyardom and the still infant entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and staying as the dominant force in Romanian society. Indeed, they always presented this idea as either a Marxist heresy or a misconception of conservative provenance.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Henri H. Stahl, *Les anciennes communautés villageoises roumaines*, Bucarest-Paris, Académie Roumaine-Éditions du C. N. R. S., 1969; Idem, "Théories de C. Dobrogeanu Gherea sur les lois de la pénétration du capitalisme dans les pays retardaires", *Review: a Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations* 2: 1, 1978, pp. 101-114; Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society*. See also John G Taylor, *From Modernization to Modes of Production: a Critique of the Sociologies of Development and Underdevelopment*, London, Macmillan, 1979; John Weeks, "Non-capitalist Modes of Production", in Tom Bottomore et al., eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 353-355.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 5 below. For the most extensive re-elaboration of this idea in contemporary comparative historical sociology see Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Post-communism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000. To assess, in this respect, the

At the moment when it became an international affair centered in the United States, after the Second World War, the theorizing on modernization was based on the widely shared assumption that societies proceeding from agrarianism to industrialism were bound to pass through the same succession of stages, on the same path of evolution.⁶⁷ Gradually, the discipline moved towards embracing the opposite stance,⁶⁸ and the understanding of differences and variations along the process of social change has never stopped to deepen ever since.⁶⁹ In pre-communist Romania, by contrast, dissatisfaction with the course of social and

originality of Romanian social criticism against the general background of international social thought, both Marxist and non-Marxist, see also András Hegedüs, "Bureaucracy", in Tom Bottomore et al., eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 57-59; Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994 [1982].

⁶⁷ Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non-communist Manifesto*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960; Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: a Study in Comparative History*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1966; Alex Inkeles, "Making Men Modern: on the Causes and Consequences of Individual Change in Six Developing Countries", *American Journal of Sociology* 75: 2, 1969, pp. 208-255.

⁶⁸ Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9: 3, 1967, pp. 292-346; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *American Journal of Sociology* 72: 4, 1967, pp. 351-362; Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development and Politics", *Comparative Politics* 3: 3, 1971, pp. 283-322; Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative History of Societies: a Critical Perspective", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15: 2, 1973, pp. 199-226.

⁶⁹ Theda Skocpol, ed., *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984; Andrew C. Janos, *Politics and Paradigms: Changing Theories of Change in the Social Sciences*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1986; J. Timmons Roberts, Amy Hite, eds., *From Modernization to Globalization: Perspectives on Development and Social Change*, Malden, Mass., Blackwell, 1999.

political development originally led social criticism, in the 1860's, to a pluralistic view of the process of modernization. Describing prevailing realities as relying on a distortion of capitalism led the reflective minds of the period towards emphasizing the idea that the very interaction between societies at various levels of development was likely to push the delayed developing ones on trajectories further apart from the western modernization "norm". Marxism contributed heavily to such an understanding and emerged deeply transformed from the intellectual encounter with the puzzle of explaining the nature of peripheral capitalism. Indeed, in its populist and social-democratic embodiments, it served for legitimizing either a politics of democratization or a sustained pleading for capitalism. It was towards the end of that era that the pluralistic view of modernization associated with a prudent search for alleviating its pains was faced with conceptions which emphasized the uniformities of social change.⁷⁰ Marxism could be put to work for the new task, and it served well for justifying the right to rule of plutocratic bureaucracies, as well as for planning their violent destruction by dictatorial means. Once the flames of permanent revolution have died down, Romanians are faced with the ghost of an oligarchic capitalism whose past embodiment has too often been enmeshed in the aura of ideological infallibility. Besides describing the contradictory ideological uses of Marxism in pre-communist Romania, this paper intended to point to a way out of this sharp alternative between existing historical models.

⁷⁰ Daniel Chirot, "Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development: the Zeletin-Voinea Debate Concerning Romania's Prospects in the 1920's and Its Contemporary Importance", in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 31-52.

5. Paradigm Change in Critical Sociology: Center and Periphery Perceptions

Romanians tend to take as trivial some ideas usually advertized as resulting from a social science paradigm change of the 1960's: that world-wide modernization proceeds on various paths; and that modernizing change can be induced top-down, by the means of state intervention. This is because, unlike in the West, social criticism consciously devoted to the issue of modernization was inaugurated here by advancing precisely such contentions, in order to make room much later on for the opposite – unilinear – view, formulated as part of local ideological confrontations. Still, they will not react in the same way when offered the idea that state-induced modernization is likely to produce a peculiar social stratification, featuring over-bureaucratization and a non-capitalist bureaucratic class. This is somewhat surprising, as such ideas stood as a central thread running through the local social thought of pre-communist times. With the hindsight provided by the works of Andrew C. Janos, the fragment of intellectual history structured around the conceptualizations of the bureaucratic elite is disclosed below and placed against the background of the conceptualizations – equally loaded ideologically – of the landholding class, initiated beforehand and in a different political setting. The aspect of strange cultural oblivion is stressed as much as that of sociological precociousness.

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It sometimes happens that the endeavor to give account historically of paradigm changes raises objections of triviality. While present commonplaces can be easily traced back to the time of their incubation, it is generally harder to convey a vivid sense of their original weirdness. Such difficulties can increase, depending on the audiences targeted. As it also often happens, however, such contextualized disappointed reactions are misleading, as they hide the audiences' ignorance of some specific implications of the same theoretical models appearing to them as seemingly eternal truths. Romania is a good testing ground for these statements. There is one particular intellectual turning point of the sort mentioned above that one must take caution not to advertize too enthusiastically when addressing, here, a group of students in social sciences and humanities. Still, there is one particular sociological insight issuing from the same reframing of theoretical views that one can hardly find as something resembling established wisdom throughout all relevant compartments of local scholarship.

The turn from a unilinear to a multilinear view of the process of social change and political development, taken by American and international comparative historical sociology and theory of modernization in the 1960's, has many times been presented – and in a peculiarly forceful way by Andrew C. Janos –, as a genuine paradigm transformation in the field.¹ At the time the theoretical revolution in question was taking place, people engaged in the enterprise felt the need to underline the fact that they were arguing their case against the background of a deeply

¹ Andrew C. Janos, *Politics and Paradigms: Changing Theories of Change in the Social Sciences*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1986; Idem, "Paradigms Revisited: Productionism, Globality, and Postmodernity in Comparative Politics", *World Politics* 50: 1, 1997, pp. 118-149.

entrenched conception about the course of social evolution, whose record went back to the late XVIIIth and early XIXth centuries – when the very distinction between “tradition” and “modernity” was first intimated by European social philosophers – and which had never been significantly put under question meanwhile.² Reasons for dissatisfaction against the existing paradigm – inherited by what was to be labeled later on as the “classical theory of modernization” from the still more classical sociological theories, stretching from the Scottish Enlightenment to Talcott Parsons – were of various kinds.³ One of them, of a special concern for the present argument, was the perceived inability of the existing comparative studies to make adequate room, in their explanations, for the “formal structure of governmental authority, which differs from, and is relatively independent of, the group formations arising from the social and economic organization of society”.⁴ Against the established view of modernization issuing, everywhere, from the spontaneous and self-induced dynamism of the social body and proceeding from bottom up, on the basis of endogenous factors, Reinhard Bendix argued that, except for the original countries of the “dual revolution”, the transformation from agrarian traditionalism to modern industrialism has been propagated under the impact of exogenous forces of change and propelled from top down, through state machineries assigned, in late modernizing societies, with greater roles

² Reinhard Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9: 3, 1967, pp. 292-346.

³ Joseph R. Gusfield, “Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change”, *American Journal of Sociology* 72: 4, 1967, pp. 351-362; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Change to Change: Modernization, Development and Politics”, *Comparative Politics* 3: 3, 1971, pp. 283-322; Dean C. Tipps, “Modernization Theory and the Comparative History of Societies: a Critical Perspective”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15: 2, 1973, pp. 199-226.

⁴ Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity”, p. 327.

than they had originally been designed to perform. Framed in such a general sociological guise, the argument took advantage of previous analyses of the changing patterns of governmental intervention in the industrializing efforts of later developing societies,⁵ while at the same time drawing on the Weberian emphasis on bureaucratic rationalization as a central feature of the modernizing process.⁶

Such early attempts to disclose the contours of state-induced modernization impelled by external forces tended to take a rather positive assessment of its achievements and an optimistic view of its prospects, a tendency maintained in some later works.⁷ By contrast, the most sophisticated theoretical and historical perspective elaborated in the same framework, a perspective that Andrew C. Janos offered by reference to pre-1945 evolution of Hungary,⁸ Romania⁹ and the whole region of East-Central Europe,¹⁰ reached different conclusions. This view

⁵ Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: a Book of Essays*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1976 [1962].

⁶ *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and transl. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York, Oxford University Press, 1958 [1946], pp. 196-244.

⁷ Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1978.

⁸ Andrew C. Janos, "The Decline of Oligarchy: Bureaucratic and Mass Politics in the Age of Dualism", in Andrew C. Janos, William B. Slottman, eds., *Revolution in Perspective: Essays on the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1971, pp. 1-61; Idem, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982.

⁹ Idem, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: the Case of Romania", in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of international Studies, 1978, pp. 72-116.

¹⁰ Idem, "The One-Party State and Social Mobilization: East Europe between the Wars", in Samuel P. Huntington, Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: the Dynamics of*

likes to underline the long-term effects that the substitution of government intervention for capitalist economic dynamism and bourgeois-type social differentiation had on the peripheral road to the modern world. Instead of acting as a temporary modernizing design enabling late-developing countries to join, at a later stage, the historical trajectory pioneered by the North-Atlantic societies at the beginning of the modern age, the strategy of development relying on bureaucratic initiative as the driving force of change relapsed into producing a new pattern of social stratification, whose most salient feature was to chronically impede the expansion of independent economic entrepreneurship, to the benefit of over-bureaucratization, political entrepreneurship and the use of the state as an “instrument of income equalization – not, to be sure, among the different strata of the local populations, but between the elites of the backward and advanced societies”.¹¹ Furthermore, post-1914 peripheral political radicalism and authoritarian politics was predicated upon the shortcomings of the same mechanisms of modernization that drained social resources to the interest of the very state structures originally meant to expand them.¹²

In both its optimistic and its pessimistic embodiments, the theory summarized so far pertains to the large body of historical and sociological thinking asserting the existence of a multiplicity of modernizing trajectories. In many of its versions, this conception also takes a stance opposite to that of classical sociological

Established One-Party Systems, New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1970, pp. 204-236; Idem, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe, 1780-1945”, *World Politics* 41: 2, 1989, pp. 325-358; Idem, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000.

¹¹ Idem, *East Central Europe*, p. 88.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 148-217.

theorizing – of the structural-functionalist, Marxist and Weberian stripes alike – regarding the effects of western influences on non-western – or less western – societies, underscoring that contacts between societies placed on different levels of development – raising specific reactions from the part of disadvantaged elites and breeding policies of “catching up” that promote the interests of the same elites – are likely to push the later-developing ones on paths of evolution further apart from the national historical trajectories that they intend to emulate. Originally animated by either the ideal to circumscribe the social preconditions of successful liberal democratization¹³ or a militant neo-Marxist critique of global capitalist exploitation,¹⁴ such pluralist views of modernization got reframed under the impact of geopolitical restructuration, before and after the demise of international communism,¹⁵ surviving the challenges of postmodernist epistemological fragmentation and even building upon the crisis of neoliberalism.¹⁶

¹³ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967; Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, Verso, 1974.

¹⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, „The Rise and Future Demise of the Capitalist World System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16: 4, 1974, pp. 387-415; Thomas R. Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective*, sec. ed., Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1996.

¹⁵ Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in the Modern Era*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986; Idem, “Why Must There Be a Last Cycle? The Prognosis for the World Capitalist System and a Prescription for Its Diagnosis”, in Georgi M. Derluguian, Scott L. Greer, eds., *Questioning Geopolitics: Political Projects in a Changing World-System*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. 69-83; Christopher Chase-Dunn, Salvatore J. Babones, eds., *Global Social Change: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2006.

¹⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989; Idem, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: towards a*

As hinted at above, educated Romanians will have ambivalent reactions when offered this fragment of intellectual history. On the one hand, they will tend to mock as a mere commonplace the idea of peripheral social change induced top-down, through state levers and following an original modernizing impulse coming from outside. Indeed, school textbooks and standard works of national history have taught them, for long decades, about the “theory of forms without substance” as an important part of the local cultural patrimony. Articulated in the 1860’s, the ideas that came under this label produced a corpus of social and cultural criticism that complained about the maladjustment between institutional and legal imports and local economic performances, social forms and cultural habits.¹⁷ While describing the outcome of emulative modernization from above with bleak overtones which strongly recall the later conceptualizations of prismatic societies,¹⁸ Romanian proto-sociologists of development also formulated generalizations about the specific course of peripheral social evolution. To be sure, this pre-communist sociological precociousness did not fail to lead, during the later decades of communism and after 1989, to some naïve or heavily ideological pieces of nationalist intellectual history, which disregarded the comparative setting of peripheral ideological reactions to modernization in order to extol the older insights into the nature of state-led social change and of its dysfunctions

Theory of Uneven Geographical Development, London, Verso, 2006; See also Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2002.

¹⁷ Andrei Oțetea et al., *Istoria poporului român*, București, Editura Științifică, 1970; Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1975; Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești, 1369-1878*, München, Ion Dumitru Verlag, 1987.

¹⁸ Fred Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries. the Theory of Prismatic Society*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964.

as a “Romanian brand”.¹⁹ Still, the less nationalistic people interested in the topic – which are definitely an overwhelming majority – will look suspiciously to both the claims to originality on behalf of local social thought and the historical reconstructions of the dramatic paradigm shift that the discipline of modernization theory is said to have encountered about 50 years ago, following more than 150 years of undisturbed reproduction of the older paradigm based on the ideas of unilinear, bottom-up and endogenously generated modernization.

On the other hand, however, this is by far not the case with the idea of a social phenomenon diagnosed by Janos as a central characteristic of peripheral modernization: the peculiar social stratification, issuing from the special role adopted by the state as an instrument of change and displaying the bureaucracy as a social group of its own, staying – to the detriment of the ever-infant and never politically significant capitalist bourgeoisie – as the real counterpart of the declining landholding elite in the social and political space. Neither the self-congratulatory nationalistic re-readings of theorizing about the disjunctions between political “forms” and social “substance”,²⁰ nor the older or recent didactic histories of Romanian sociology²¹ boast with this idea as a local contribution to the understanding of modernization or as an anticipation of later-day international wisdom in the field. It was thanks to Janos’ works, corroborated by some other perspectives of East

¹⁹ Ilie Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critică românească*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984; Constantin Schifirneț, *Formele fără fond, un brand românesc*, București, Comunicare. ro, 2007.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Miron Constantinescu, Ovidiu Bădina, Ernő Gall, *Sociological Thought in Romania*, transl. by Silviu Brucan, Bucharest, Meridiane, 1974; Maria Larionescu, *Istoria sociologiei românești*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2007.

European modernization,²² that, some time ago, we started to disclose the topic of the bureaucratic class as a central thread running through Romanian debates, from the 1860's to the 1940's, together with the strange history of its subsequent oblivion.²³

Facing specific challenges, the reflective minds of the peripheries – starting with early XIXth century Germans, at the time uncomfortably aware of their peripheral position by comparison to Britain and France – prepared the 1960's paradigm change in modernization theory long before it was accomplished. While a global history of thinking on modernization is lacking, some segments of it have been visited and brought together with a view to either digging out theoretical statements of significance beyond the context of their emergence,²⁴ or tracing the long pedigrees of nefarious intellectual traditions and policy-making preconceptions.²⁵ The perspectives of this kind taken on the Romanian relevant intellectual record – and addressed to international audiences – fell, as a general rule, in the first category.²⁶

²² Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951]; Hugh Seton-Watson, "The Intellectuals and Revolution: Social Forces in Eastern Europe since 1848", in Richard Pares, A. J. P. Taylor, eds., *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, London, Macmillan, 1956, pp. 394-430; Gale Stokes, "The Social Origins of East European Politics", *East European Politics and Societies* 1: 1, 1986, pp. 30-74.

²³ See Chapters 2 and 4 above.

²⁴ Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1969]; Daniel Chirot, Thomas D. Hall, "World-System Theory", *Annual Review of Sociology* 8, 1982, pp. 81-106.

²⁵ Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective: Populism, Nationalism and Industrialization*, sec. ed., London, Routledge, 1989.

²⁶ Daniel Chirot, "Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development: the Zeletin-Voinea Debate Concerning Romania's Prospects in the 1920's and Its Contemporary Importance", in

However, primarily interested as they were in disclosing the wider history of non-classical economic theorizing on the dependency syndrome and of neo-Marxist world-system analysis, they hardly give a clue to assessing the pivotal role that the topic of a bureaucratic class played in the same dynamic of social thought.²⁷ Actually, at least as far as Romania is concerned, all such historical contributions have to make sense of an intricate cultural heritage, displaying both precocious intellectual departures and an entrenched difficulty from the part of intellectual endeavors to disentangle mature science from mere ideology. The fates of two successive – and heavily ideological – Romanian sociologies of the ruling elites, initiated in the 1820's and the 1870's respectively, provide a good case in point.

2

The disentanglement of western historical sociology from the web of ideological advocacy, and its institutionalization as an academic discipline in its own terms, was completed in the period 1890-1920, around the figures of Durkheim and Weber.²⁸ For sure, major theoretical constructions in the field could still be dramatically reshaped, in the same era, as ideological instruments meant to address changing political constellations, as was the case with Tönnies' "community"/"society" dichotomy, originally – in the

Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 31-52; Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

²⁷ Love, *Crafting the Third World*, pp. 50-51.

²⁸ Anthony Giddens, "Classical Social Theory and the Origins of Modern Sociology", *The American Journal of Sociology* 81: 4, 1976, pp. 703-729.

1880's – a value-neutral distinction between historical stages, increasingly turned by himself, subsequently, into a device for differentiating degrees of cultural malaise within the space of modernity²⁹ and finally appropriated by the rising conservative revolution of the 1920's.³⁰ Still, starting with those decades, sociological analysis – including those versions of it with a strong historical bent – was to act at least as much by providing external standards for the evaluation of ideological dynamics as by contributing to its unfolding.³¹

While the prehistory of the discipline went back to the ancient Greek cyclical theories of social evolution,³² its modern proto-history bore, at its beginnings, a powerful mark of conservative ideology and Romantic nostalgia for the traditional world in the course of being displaced by the rapid advent of urbanism, industrialism, individualism and social equalization.³³ By contrast, Romanian social criticism was driven, initially, not by the sudden revelation of disruptive change but by the painful intimation of stagnation. Following the breaking down of the post-Byzantine, pan-Balkan and Orthodox cultural

²⁹ Arthur Mitzman, "Tönnies and German Society, 1887-1914: from Cultural Pessimism to the Celebration of the *Volksgemeinschaft*", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32: 4, 1971, pp. 507-524.

³⁰ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, New York, Norton, 2001 [1968], pp. 80, 96; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 18-49.

³¹ Richard Bellamy, "The Advent of the Masses and the Making of the Modern Theory of Democracy", and Antonino Palumbo, Alan Scott, "Weber, Durkheim and the Sociology of the Modern State", both in Terence Ball, Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 70-103, resp. 368-391.

³² Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969.

³³ Idem, *The Sociological Tradition*, New York, Basic Books, 1966; Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity".

unity, and having engaged, together with the other peoples of the area, on a nationalist political path sustained by western ideas,³⁴ the Romanians discovered the state of backwardness that their society displayed by comparison to the more western ones. In the writings of the great boyar Dinicu Golescu, who most consistently practiced this comparison in the 1820's, social evils affecting the peasant masses were blamed on the bad habits and cultural primitivism of the landholding ruling elite to which the writer also belonged.³⁵ Golescu, who was to be seen, later on, as the "first Romanian populist",³⁶ stood at the origins of an intellectual tradition that brought together an ardent nationalist feeling, an enthusiastic pleading for modernization on the western model – most conspicuously embodied by France – and a harsh indictment of the boyar class. Together, westernizer nationalism and anti-boyar social criticism emerge, retrospectively, as the structuring recurring ideas of the remarkably unitary "oppositional" or "critical culture" of "fortyeightism", unfolding from the 1820's to the 1860's and centered upon the revolutionary experiments taking place in both Wallachia and

³⁴ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994.

³⁵ Dinicu Golescu, *Însemnare a călătoriei mele*, ed. de D. Panaitescu-Perpessiciu, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1952 [1826]. Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatura între 1780-1840*, București, Cartea Românească, 2008 [1972], pp. 33-100.

³⁶ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice în România, de la origini până la 1866*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, 2005 [1910], pp. 124-127.

Moldavia, as well as among the Transylvanian Romanians of the Habsburg monarchy, in 1848.³⁷

Appropriately, the supporters of this modernizing and oppositional discourse came increasingly from outside the stratum of great boyardom, the most vocal and influential of them, as Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Mihail Kogălniceanu and Nicolae Bălcescu, being representatives of the lesser nobility or even of a third estate origin. Political radicalization went hand in hand with the strengthening of the French-Western connection, due to stages of education abroad and of political exile, as well as with the formulation of deeper insights, sustained by a longer historical perspective, on the social predicament of the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities. The first Romanian historical sociology was elaborated as part of this ideological struggle. Scattered across several other utterances of the time,³⁸ it acquired the most characteristic expression in 1846 and 1850 writings of Bălcescu.³⁹ Conceived as interventions in the ongoing debate on the appropriateness and efficacy of land reform, meant to redress the grievances of the peasantry by the abolition of feudal arrangements, they stressed the moral side of the pleading in favor of emancipation, by arguing that peasant property rights had antedated the imposition of feudal servitude. Bălcescu went back to the times of the foundation of Romanian states in the XIVth century, depicting medieval society as composed overwhelmingly of free small-owners

³⁷ Al. Dima et al., coord., *Istoria literaturii române*, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., vol. 2, 1968; Georgescu, *Istoria gândirii politice românești*.

³⁸ Paul Cornea, M. Zamfir, coord., *Gândirea românească în epoca pașoptistă*, 1830-1860, București, Editura pentru Literatură, vols. 1-2, 1968-1969.

³⁹ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere*, ed. de G. Zane și Elena G. Zane, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., vols. 1-2, 1974, 1982.

of land and accordingly presenting the later advent of feudalism as a process of illegitimate and abusive dispossession, made possible by external military pressures. Furthermore, tracing how “the ancient equality, in terms of rights and estate, was extinguished and the social monstrosity of a whole country enslaved to several individuals came into being”,⁴⁰ he described a process of progressive social decay, aggravated in turn by Ottoman domination, Greek-Phanariot infiltration, Russian reactionary social policies disguised as political protection and even legislative modernization in the form of the Organic Statutes, adopted in the 1830’s in order to respond to opportunities of extensive agricultural exploitation on the large boyar domains, now connected with the international cereal market.

The fusion between early XIXth century East European modernizing liberalism and the democratic European Romantic nationalism springing from the turmoil of the 1830 revolutions has often been underlined.⁴¹ Some recent comparative perspectives disclosed, moreover, an intellectual pattern common to most countries of the area, couched in the guise of a historical discourse meant to discover, in the depths of the national past, freedom-based, egalitarian and democratic arrangements. Such ideological historical constructions performed the function of entrenching the drive to revolutionary political change inspired by western models into an appropriately reframed cultural

⁴⁰ Idem, “Despre starea socială a muncitorilor plugari în Principatele Române în deosebite timpuri” [1846], in *Opere*, vol. 1, pp. 156-157.

⁴¹ Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740-1985: Feudalism to Communism*, sec. ed., London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, pp. 59-83; Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*, transl. by Danuta Przekop, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004, pp. 73-113.

memory and local political culture, by presenting the modern ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity as having distant native counterparts.⁴² The discourse on social history with a populist and democratic ring offered by the Romanian fortyeighters belonged, for sure, to the same ideological family, dedicated as it was to showing that “the real civilization is the one that derives from our bosom, by way of reforming and improving the institutions of the past with the ideas and successes of the present”.⁴³ It also belonged together with the neighboring, South-Slav political discourses of the same era, due to its radical and messianic orientation. Indeed, far from mirroring the concerns of contemporary western liberalism for securing individual freedom against the encroachments of populist authoritarianism,⁴⁴ it borrowed heavily from pre-Marxist European socialism, envisioning an egalitarian and vaguely defined world of social harmony.⁴⁵ Its emphasis on the urgencies of nation building and consolidation over and above the policies of internal reform was, to the same extent, a region-wide trait. It possessed, nevertheless, some peculiar features. Unlike the Serbian or Bulgarian versions of political radicalism, it did not project back into the past the ideal of a populist agrarian socialism, lacking, in fact, any

⁴² Maciej Janowski, “Three Historians”, *CEU History Department Yearbook* 2001-2002, pp. 199-232; Diana Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism”, in Iván Zoltán Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006, pp. 399-456.

⁴³ Mihail Kogălniceanu, quoted in Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism”, p. 440.

⁴⁴ Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, transl. by R. G. Collingwood, Boston, Beacon Press, 1961 [1927].

⁴⁵ G. Zane, “Saint-simonism și fourierism în România” [1970], in *Studii*, ed. de Elena G. Zane, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980, pp. 61-81.

connection with the Russian populist currents of thought based on the idea of the *obshchina*.⁴⁶ Instead, it cultivated the vision of a purported original agrarian individualism. Still more significantly – and no matter how oddly such a stance was articulated with its socialist leanings –, the fortyeighter oppositional discourse shared with the discourses defending the status-quo an unqualified preference for the European free trade economic liberalism of the Scottish sort, adopted through French interpretations.⁴⁷ This is certainly telling for the equally unqualified stance of fortyeighter critical culture in favor of letting free western influences to pervade Romanian society through all available channels.

The social predicament of 1848 was largely superseded by the agrarian reform of 1864, which divided the land between peasants and landlords, placing it under the provisions of bourgeois property rights and Napoleonic legislation, in the footsteps of the abolition of privileges in 1858. Still, the radical liberal historical sociology left an intricate legacy to the following Romanian engagement with understanding the country's social history. Emerged from within ideological advocacy, Romanian historical approaches to the topic were to be affected repeatedly by changing ideological climates. The “democratic” interpretation pioneered by Bălcescu came to be incorporated into the body of various readings of the past, differing in terms of both scientific premises and ideological allegiances. The first influential such appropriation took place in the first decade of the XXth century, close to the moment of the peasant revolt of

⁴⁶ Traian Stoianovich, “The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution, 1830-1880”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1: 3, 1959, pp. 242-272; Gale Stokes, “Svetozar Marković in Russia”, *Slavic Review* 31: 3, 1972, pp. 611-625.

⁴⁷ Eugen Demetrescu, *Liberalismul economic în evoluția României moderne*, București, n. p., 1940.

1907, when a new agrarian reform meant to consolidate insufficient peasant holdings was being envisioned. Making his case in association with the populist agrarian intellectual group indebted to Russian influences, the historian Radu Rosetti ⁴⁸ elaborated at great length Bălcescu's views, dissociating them from the retrospective egalitarian utopia of 1848 but maintaining the conception of the primacy of peasant property rights and of peasant gradual enserfment through successive illegitimate boyar encroachments. Unlike Bălcescu, however, he considered the collective village, and not the propertied individual family, as the original Romanian social form.

After getting connected, thus, with the populist Left, Bălcescu's historical utopia came to acquire a right-wing incarnation in the writings of the traditionalist historian Nicolae Iorga. The latter's image of the Romanian medieval world was that of a society composed of free collective villages, contributing with their manpower to the military might of centralized and effective monarchical states. Again, feudalism appears as remarkable for its absence, as the original boyardom was an administrative class subservient to the princes and devoid of autonomous political power. Such arrangements could exist due to the limited interference of the states with the life of the peasant world and the local communities.⁴⁹ Peasant decline, accordingly, was to come not as a result of feudal expansion, but due to the rise of the expanded modern state, prone to exercise a tighter control over social life and developed, in

⁴⁸ Radu Rosetti, *Pentru ce s-au răsculat țărani?*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Editura Eminescu, 1987 [1908]; Z. Ornea, *Poporanismul*, București, Minerva, 1972.

⁴⁹ Nicolae Iorga, *Studii asupra Evului Mediu românesc*, ed. de Șerban Papacostea, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984.

Romanian lands, starting with the end of the XVIth century, in connection with Ottoman domination. Increasingly charged with fiscal responsibilities and expanding its power accordingly, the boyardom was redefined as a landholding class, encroaching upon peasant freedoms and properties.⁵⁰ Although the ideological dimension of Iorga's historical vision of the Middle Ages is not made explicit in the writings with this content, it emerges from his many pieces of world history and political thinking, that compare negatively modern freedom or democracy – developing hand in hand with administrative centralization and the suppression of local institutions of self-government – to ancient and particularly medieval freedom and democracy, developed organically in the orbit of small communities.⁵¹ This is how, intended by Bălcescu as an article of modernizing and democratic creed, the fortyeighter historical sociology came to be appropriated by a vision that considered the survivals of medievalism as an antidote to the totalitarian drive of modern political life.⁵²

By contrast, the last embodiment so far of the same social historical view is anything but retrogressively utopian. Fashioned by the historical sociologist Henri H. Stahl under communism⁵³ – but originated in the 1930's –, it stays as part of his sustained effort to consistently and genuinely interpret national and regional past in the

⁵⁰ Șerban Papacostea, "Nicolae Iorga și Evul Mediu românesc", in Iorga, *Studii asupra Evului Mediu românesc*, pp. 402-428.

⁵¹ Nicolae Iorga, *Evoluția ideii de libertate*, ed. de Ilie Bădescu, București, Meridiane, 1987 [1928]; Idem, *Originea și sensul democrației*, Vălenii de Munte, Datina Românească, [1930]; Idem, *Idei asupra problemelor actuale*, București, Cugetarea, [1934].

⁵² Idem, *Dezvoltarea imperialismului contemporan*, ed. de Andrei Pippidi, București, Albatros, 1997 [1940], p. 72.

⁵³ Henri H. Stahl, *Les anciennes communautés villageoises roumaines*, Bucarest-Paris, Académie Roumaine-Éditions du C. N. R. S., 1969.

Marxist theoretical framework, against the dominant historiography rejected by the author for invoking Marxism only as a matter of ideological convenience.⁵⁴ Stahl's vision, that appears, in fact, as a remarkable achievement of non-conventional thinking under harsh conditions of political control, concurs with Iorga's in maintaining that medieval society was composed overwhelmingly of free village communities. This was not, however, a manifestation of social harmony under the aegis of an organic conception of freedom, but a result of the fact that the Romanian states functioned as social and institutional inheritors of the Asiatic empires of the steppes, that had developed, in their turn, a particular variant of the "tributary mode of production". Extracting their revenues primarily from the taxation of international routes stretching through their territories and served by a warrior aristocracy sustained by state revenues, such superficial polities allowed a great degree of autonomy to the peasant communities. Feudalism was imposed gradually, around 1600, as a result of fiscal pressures from the part of the Ottoman state, which led to the strengthening of the nobility entrusted with rights of tax collection. The second part of Stahl's argument squares, of course, with the widely shared historical view referring to the imposition of a "second serfdom" in all countries of Eastern Europe, in post-medieval times, under the influence of either Prussian-type commercialization of agriculture or fiscal requirements.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Idem, *Probleme confuze în istoria socială a României*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1992.

⁵⁵ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, "Șerbia și regimul fiscal. Încercare de istorie comparată română, slavă și bizantină", in *Studii bizantine de istorie economică și socială*, ed. și trad. de Alexandru-Florin Platon și Ion Toderășcu, Iași, Polirom, 2003 [1938], pp. 208-226; Ivan T. Berend, "The Historical Evolution of Eastern Europe as a Region", in Ellen Comisso, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, eds., *Power*,

Although well received abroad,⁵⁶ Stahl's conception is not standard wisdom in Romania. Having to stress the universal nature of feudalism as a necessary stage of historical evolution, mainstream historiography of the communist times⁵⁷ could not agree with the democratic reading of the past advanced by the people of 1848, whom it heavily celebrated otherwise. A part of pre-communist historiography offered the basic arguments for arguing the primacy of feudalism, seen as either the manifestation of a European-wide phenomenon with some local adjustments,⁵⁸ or as a local adaptation of late-Byzantine feudalization, filtered through the social prism of the Second Bulgarian Empire,⁵⁹ a vision also developed after 1945.⁶⁰ Such historical perspectives elaborated shortly before the installation of communism drew on earlier ones, influenced by the ideological debates on the agrarian question and set in direct confrontation with Bălcescu, Rosetti and the like.⁶¹ Interestingly enough,

Purpose and Collective Choice: Economic Strategy in Socialist States, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 153-170.

⁵⁶ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, pp. 390-392; Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: the Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York, Academic Press, 1976.

⁵⁷ V. Costăchel et al., *Viața feudală în Țara Românească și Moldova*, București, Editura Științifică, 1957; Ovid Sachelarie, Nicolae Stoicescu, coord., *Instituții feudale în țările române. Dicționar*, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1988.

⁵⁸ Petre P. Panaitescu, "Problema originii clasei boierești", in *Interpretări românești*, ed. de Ștefan S. Gorovei și Maria Magdalena Székely, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1994 [1947], pp. 31-64.

⁵⁹ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor în Principatele Române*, ed. de Șerban Papacostea, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1995 [1977], pp. 34-57.

⁶⁰ Valentin Al. Georgescu, *Bizanțul și instituțiile românești până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea*, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1980.

⁶¹ Constantin Giurescu, *Studii de istorie socială*, ed. de Constantin C. Giurescu, București, Universul, 1943; I. C. Filitti, "Proprietatea solului în Principatele Române până la 1864" [1935], in *Opere*

still, the most distant origins of the “feudal” thesis have to be found in the interventions of the boyar (informal) conservative party at the time of the 1848 revolution and the 1864 agrarian reform, and particularly in those of the conservative political leader Barbu Catargiu.⁶² While the successive ideological stakes of the discussion have passed away, the Bălcescu-Catargiu duel could still be considered as an open question.⁶³

3

Histories of Romanian ideological trends like to structure their subject matter around a liberal-conservative divide, stretching from the early XIXth century to the interwar period and exhibiting a great degree of continuity within each of the two groups thus delineated.⁶⁴ This is misleading, as the ideological topography of the post-1860's decades looks markedly different from the preceding one. It was in the years following the end of the Russian Protectorate in 1856, due to the victory of allied western powers in the Crimean War, that the hitherto oppositional modernizing liberalism of the 1848 era moved, gradually, towards becoming the privileged governmental political force. This transformation, started with the repatriation of exiled revolutionaries and

alese, ed. de Georgeta Penelea, București, Editura Eminescu, 1985, pp.197-439.

⁶² Henri H. Stahl, *Gânditori și curente de istorie socială românească*, ed de Paul H. Stahl, București, Editura Universității din București, 2001, pp. 104-110.

⁶³ Florin Constantiniu, *De la Răutu și Roller la Mușat și Ardeleanu*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2007.

⁶⁴ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*; Victoria F. Brown, “The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: the Case of Romanian Liberalism”, in Stephen Fischer-Galati, et al., eds. *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1982, pp. 269-301; Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism”.

continued with the constitutional constructions of 1858-1866, was completed in 1876, a moment which, following the founding of the National Liberal Party in 1875 – through the aggregation of previously amorphous fortyeighter political groups – inaugurated a long liberal tenure lasting until 1888. The party claiming the inheritance of 1848 was to alternate in power, then, with the conservative one – itself organized in 1880 –, but with increasing fortunes. While conservatism virtually disappeared in the 1920's, liberalism got consolidated from the First World War, making governments between 1922 and 1926, and again from 1933 to 1937. Among the political leaders of revolutionary times, Ion C. Brătianu came to put his stamp most characteristically on governmental liberalism, establishing a lasting family control upon its political machinery and economic resources. Once migrating, thus, from the opposition to the sphere of power, liberalism came to be dramatically transformed as a discourse. As expressed primarily in parliamentary speeches and official newspaper articles, the new political rhetoric dropped out democratic messianism and populist advocacies for universal suffrage, pleading instead the cause of limited franchise and of social responsibility, while at the same time abandoning any semblance of socialist tendencies. Having inherited from the previous era the statist and nationalist orientation, it placed it on the better foundation of economic protectionism, voiced in association with Brătianu's party starting with the 1880's.⁶⁵

Most characteristically, though, was the very fact that, much like the conservative discourse acting beforehand as an ideological reinforcement of the existing

⁶⁵ Costin Murgescu, *Mersul ideilor economice la români*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, vols. 1-2, 1987-1990.

order dominated by the boyar landholding elite and indicted as such by the fortyeighthers, liberal discourse lost ground in the public sphere, after the 1860's, to raising intellectual fashions and ideological trends. First and foremost among them was a rejuvenated intellectual conservatism – loosely associated, originally, with the prevailing political one –, born in the 1860's within the headquarters of the *Junimea* cultural movement and having as some of its promoters individuals that presented the same biographical profile as the leaders of fortyeightism, namely lesser boyar or non-boyar origins and western education. From the beginning, the young conservatives assumed the social role previously played by the fortyeighthers: that of an opposition group criticizing the establishment – increasingly associated with the liberals – in the name of western culture, which they associated primarily with the social science of German organicism and Spencerian evolutionism. Unlike their forerunners in the field of social criticism, they argued not as unqualified enthusiastic westernizers but as reluctant ones, pleading the case of a better readjustment between “forms” and “substance”, against the distortions of a society modernized from above, in the absence of corresponding prerequisites. The new critical culture emerged in this way was to evolve in a different way than the fortyeighter one, being shaped as a welter of ideas about the shortcomings of peripheral modernization which got associated, up to the 1940's, with a variety of ideological trends.

The most conspicuous manifestation of the new cultural polarity – that placed in confrontation a governmental liberalism claiming on its behalf the legacy of 1848 and an oppositional conservatism which could have better claimed the same legacy due to the social function it performed – was the formulation of a new political and historical sociology. Its first influential

utterance came in 1876, in a parliamentary speech delivered by Titu Maiorescu, the leader of the young conservatives, on the issue of school reform. Complaining about the social parasitism of university education developed in excess of social demand, Maiorescu moved on to decry the plague of over-bureaucratization. Offered on the benches of the university, he says, “some Latin and Greek and a bit of jurisprudence, such that they cannot possibly survive independently of the state budget”, young people are transformed into natural postulants for state sinecures, such that the state policies themselves are inescapably pushed towards “the creation of official positions and the inflation of budgetary salaries”, being exposed, by the same token, to the “lack of independent activities, the lack of industrialists, leaseholders or property-holders, entrepreneurs and merchants”.⁶⁶ Employing a quasi-Marxist language when approaching the relationship between infrastructural social and economic forms and the institutional superstructure, the evolutionist conservative discovers that state-led modernization produces a specific social differentiation, the declining boyardom being gradually replaced not by an industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, but by a middle class of state officials. As for Bălcescu, before him, the lot of the peasant masses is, for Maiorescu, indicative for the structural ills of Romanian society. Unlike the democratic prophet, however, he blames peasant misery not on boyar greed, but on fiscal pressures meant to satisfy bureaucratic material needs.

Maiorescu’s sociological intuition was to be broadened by social critics of various stripes. The satirical playwright indebted to young conservative

⁶⁶ Titu Maiorescu, “Asupra reformei legii pentru instrucțiunea publică” [1876], in *Discursuri parlamentare*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, vol. 1, 2001 [1897, 1915], p. 245.

ideology I. L. Caragiale took several inroads into the field of social theory in order to discover that Romania suffered from the reversal of developmental sequences, with state building coming in advance of social differentiation.⁶⁷ The great landholder P. P. Carp, emerged as a political leader of the same intellectual group, depicted local society as “a budgetary democracy”,⁶⁸ while his associate Theodor Rosetti contributed to the expanding vision about the distortions of emulative modernization with a genetic theory, explaining that bureaucratic profligacy resulted from the incongruence between lifestyles and consumer behaviors of western provenance and limited economic resources.⁶⁹ The traditionalist Mihai Eminescu added to the sociology of the bureaucratic elite a flavor of xenophobia, presenting the parasitic state class as a social cluster of foreign origin and of various ethnicities, spread over the body of indigenous Romanian peasantry from neighboring countries,⁷⁰ while his disciple, the anti-Semitic theorist A. C. Cuza, adopted the same ideas as part of his conception indebted to social Darwinism.⁷¹ The agrarian populist Constantin Stere denounced the unceasing combat “for a piece of budgetary cheese”, coupled with the political class’ subservience to foreign

⁶⁷ I. L. Caragiale, “Politică și cultură” [1896], in *Publicistică și corespondență*, ed. de Marcel Duță, București, Grai și Suflet, 1999, pp. 98-104.

⁶⁸ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Minerva, vol. 2, 1992 [1926], p. 96. See also P. P. Carp, *Discursuri parlamentare*, ed. de Marcel Duță, București, Grai și Suflet, 2000.

⁶⁹ Theodor Rosetti, “Despre direcțiunea progresului nostru” [1874], in Eugen Lovinescu, coord., *Antologia ideologiei junimiste*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1942, pp. 117-162.

⁷⁰ Mihai Eminescu, *Opere politice*, Iași, Editura Timpul, vol. 2, 1998; Dumitru Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, ed. de Oliviu Tocaciu, București, Pacifica, 1994 [1932].

⁷¹ A. C. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente*, Iași, n. p., 1895.

interests.⁷² Following the turn of the century, the second generation young conservative Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, stepped in German social psychology, integrated social and cultural criticism into his theory about the monstrosities of non-authentic modernity, concurring with Stere in presenting the peripheral political industry as playing at the hands of foreign domination, as part of the syndrome of economic colonialism.⁷³ Over the same period, the socialist dissenters converted to free trade liberalism H. Sanielevici and Ștefan Antim underscored the connection between the exploitation of society to the benefit of the bureaucracy and the protectionist economic policies embraced by the National Liberal Party.⁷⁴

The growing criticism against the state bureaucratic oligarchy – as different from the landholding oligarchy inherited from pre-modern times and entrenched by the arrangements of commercial agriculture in the 1830's – had counterparts in countries like Serbia or Bulgaria,⁷⁵ whose conditions of social vacuum, left behind by the retreat of the Ottoman state and nobility,⁷⁶ made even greater room for the widespread social perception of the category of state officials as an exploitative class. The Romanian sociology of the bureaucracy as a social class of its own, different from both the declining boyardom

⁷² C. Stere, "Din notițele unui observator ipocondric (un foileton social)" [1893], in *Scrieri politice și filozofice*, ed. de Victor Rizescu, București, Dominor, 2005, pp. 129-167.

⁷³ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "Cultura română și politicianismul" [1904], in *Personalismul energetic și alte scrieri*, ed. de Gh. Al. Cazan, București, Editura Eminescu, 1984, pp. 1-104.

⁷⁴ H. Sanielevici, *Încercări critice*, București, Carol Göbl, 1903; Ștefan Antim, *Chestiunea socială în România*, București, Imprimeria "La Roumanie", 1908.

⁷⁵ Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878-1918: a History*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1983; Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development: the Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth Century Serbia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1990.

⁷⁶ Stokes, "The Social Origins of East European Politics".

and an emerging bourgeoisie suffering from chronic economic and political impotence, was further expanded in the theoretical framework of Marxism. In its most elaborate formulations, it features as a local product of the widespread efforts to make the theory of scientific socialism to resonate with conditions of agrarian backwardness and delayed development. First in line among such Romanian theoretical endeavors was that of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, which originally placed its emphasis – in the same manner as in the later theorizing on “peripheral modes of production”⁷⁷ – on understanding the agrarian economy of “neoserfdom”, depicted as a combination of feudal and bourgeois elements hindering the full development of capitalism and, hence, the country’s advance towards socialism.⁷⁸ A chapter of Gherea’s main book of 1910, devoted to the topic, makes some hints, however, to a social phenomenon with no established Marxist sociological label. As he says, “the state administration has started to use its great power to its own betterment, to emancipate itself and transform itself into a parasitic social category, practicing social exploitation on its own counts, [...] thus transforming itself into a new class, a rival of the dominant [landholding] one”.⁷⁹ Several posthumous articles published in 1920 and 1930 – and intended as drafts of a comprehensive book on the nature of Romania’s social conditions – rounded up his theory of the “oligarchy” as a non-feudal and yet non-capitalist class. This social class, Gherea now makes clear, “is not

⁷⁷ Charles K. Wilber, Kenneth P. Jameson, eds., *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, fifth. ed., New York, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994.

⁷⁸ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Neioiobăgia” [1910], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 4, 1977.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

the representative of some definite economic interests, but instead, as a genuine oligarchy, it serves the interest of a *sui generis* industry, namely the political industry”.⁸⁰

In the Romanian interwar ideological milieu, Marxism could be further invoked and interpreted, in turn, for legitimizing the bureaucratic oligarchy as a necessary endowment of accelerated modernization; for reasserting it, again, in the fashion of Gherea, as a hinder to capitalist development; and, finally, for denying the meaning of the notion and rejecting it as an ideological construct meant to legitimate the treason of Marxist ideals. Moreover, the debate put into question not only the issue of social structure and the existence of a bureaucratic class, but also the underlying conception of a diversity of modernizing paths.

The first two of the ideological instrumentalizations and sociological interpretations of Marxism invoked above featured in the 1920's, being represented in turn by the “legal Marxist” Ștefan Zeletin – dubbed by his adversaries as an “oligarchic Marxist” and pleading the cause of the liberal-dominated political and modernizing establishment – and by the social democrats Lotar Rădăceanu and Șerban Voinea. Writing as a theorist of unilinear development – six decades after Maiorescu had pioneered the opposite, multilinear conception about modernization – Zeletin acknowledged the state oligarchy as an integral part of the local social landscape, in order to extol its positive modernizing function, as a XIXth century peripheral embodiment of the political arrangements of European monarchical absolutism and meant, as the latter ones, to watch over the growth of an infant capitalist economy passing through the stage of

⁸⁰ Idem, “[Despre oligarhia română]” [1914, 1920, 1930], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 176-231.

mercantilism. Having performed its role of inducing economic development and social change through state mechanisms, the oligarchy was being gradually replaced, after the First World War, by a capitalist financial elite emerged from within it and in charge of a monopolist economy that Zeletin, following Rudolf Hilferding, took as a world predicament of the time.⁸¹ The disciples of Gherea, in their turn, denied the meaning of Zeletin's historical sociology to the root, arguing that Romania's external involvement in the world capitalist market, as an exporter of primary products, had not led to the refashioning of internal social arrangements on the capitalist pattern, but on the contrary, had produced the interconnected phenomena of a neo-feudal agrarian society and a bureaucratized middle class with no authentic capitalist vocation.⁸² Moving farther than Gherea, they advocated a sustained alliance between the working class, together with its socialist vanguard, and the still feeble but yet expanding economic bourgeoisie, against the oligarchy whose main objective was "to paralyze capitalist progress"⁸³ and turn it to its sole benefit.

Besides Zeletin's, the only other sociology of modernization of the unilinear stripe produced in pre-communist Romania was formulated under the inspiration of communist Marxism and was to place a heavy burden upon the following evolution of the

⁸¹ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul său istoric*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Humanitas, 1991 [1925], pp. 178-191.

⁸² Lotar Rădăceanu, "Oligarhia română. Studiu asupra istoriei capitalismului în România", *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 5: 3-4, 1924, pp. 497-532; 6: 1-2, 1926, pp. 160-184; 6: 3-4, 1927, pp. 435-459; Șerban Voinea, *Marxism oligarhic. Contribuție la problema dezvoltării capitaliste a României*, București, Editura Brănișteanu, 1926.

⁸³ Rădăceanu, "Oligarhia română", *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 6: 3-4, 1927, p. 441.

discipline, or, much rather, upon its gradual reemergence after a temporary collapse. In a series of works conceived in the 1930's, but published after the Soviet military occupation of 1944, the social theorist Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu defined his ideological identity towards his social-democratic rivals by reference to their two most conspicuous sociological innovations: the conception of a neo-feudal mode of production and that of a bureaucratic class, posited as proofs of Romania's temporary departure from the western, capitalist path of evolution. Asserting that social evolution could only take place through the juxtaposition between a declining feudal social segment and a rising capitalist one, he rejected the idea of the state oligarchy as a theoretical artifice advanced by the socialists in order to offer justifications for their alliance with bourgeois interests.⁸⁴

Pătrășcanu's rigid interpretation of Marxist historical sociology was to be simplified further in the subsequent decades. Still, Gherea's analysis of neoserfdom was to be recovered by Henri H. Stahl, as part of his overall endeavor in favor of a genuine, flexible and innovative use of Marxist categories,⁸⁵ and even poured by the same author into the international debates on non-capitalist modes of production.⁸⁶ The works of intellectual history produced over the last decades of communism concurred in this revaluation of Gherea's wisdom,⁸⁷ although those versions

⁸⁴ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Problemele de bază ale României*, București, Socec & Co, 1944, pp. 257-258 ; Idem, *Un veac de frământări sociale, 1821-1907*, București, Editura Politică, 1969 [1945].

⁸⁵ Stahl, *Les anciennes communautés villageoises roumaines*.

⁸⁶ Idem, "Théories de C. Dobrogeanu Gherea sur les lois de la pénétration du capitalisme dans les pays retardaires", *Review: a Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations* 2: 1, 1978, pp. 101-114.

⁸⁷ Z. Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, București, Cartea Românească, 1983.

of it that did not subscribe to the nationalist orientation of Ceaușescu's regime tended – somehow self-contradictory – to place a general negative assessment upon the broader vision of “forms without substance”, to which Gherea's views also belonged, presenting it as a vehicle of political reaction.⁸⁸ The tricky sociological conception of the bureaucratic class was to have a much worse fate. The evaluations produced within the field of intellectual history denounced Maiorescu's complaints about the inflation of budgetary offices, to the detriment of productive abilities, as an attempt “to substitute a preconceived schema of conservative provenance to social reality”.⁸⁹ Mainstream sociology simply repeated Pătrășcanu's considerations,⁹⁰ while the half-dissident Stahl shows to be remarkably conformist on this topic. He notes in passing, thus, that Rădulescu-Motru “is interesting, among other things, because he anticipates the theory of the ‘oligarchy’, that Gherea and his disciples would also speak about, distinguishing it from the bourgeois class. This is a weak theory, which was nevertheless to have some other occurrences”.⁹¹ As for Zeletin, he borrows from Gherea the theory of the oligarchy, such that “is funny to see how the two rivals agree precisely upon the weakest part of their views”.⁹² Still more telling is a pronouncement of the same brilliant author in an interview he gave in the 1980's, with few prospects for publication at the time. Here, he vaguely recalls the conversation with “an American scholar”, who was saying that the Romanians were not conscious of Rădulescu-Motru's originality, when theorizing the social

⁸⁸ Idem, *Junimea și junimismul*; Idem, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980.

⁸⁹ Idem, *Junimea și junimismul*, p. 197.

⁹⁰ Ernő Gall, *Sociologia burgheză din România. Studii critice*, ed. a II-a, București, Editura Politică, 1963.

⁹¹ Stahl, *Gânditori și curente*, p. 135.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

profile of the oligarchic politician “as a person who has no other profession but to act as a kind of intermediary between the political life and the masses... Well, it is hard to find the appropriate term”.⁹³ Here we have a dramatic testimony for the force by which oblivion can hit the collective memory of a cultural community: an idea that, at the beginning of the XXth century, was shared by social analysts otherwise ideologically opposed on many other questions and acted as a common denominator for the various critiques of local social arrangements, can only be recovered in our times by the means of an exercise in the archeology of ideas.

Stahl was right in his recollections. At the time Rădulescu-Motru, Gherea, Zeletin and Rădăceanu argued about oligarchic bureaucratization as a symptom of the distortions of capitalism in the setting of delayed modernization, the major European schools of sociology did not offer a statement of the sort. Weber fears, it is true, over-bureaucratization, but conceives of it as coming from the internal dynamics of rationalization set in motion at the beginning of modernization, and as such taking place against the background of consummate capitalist development.⁹⁴ As a proof, he does not approach East European realities from this perspective.⁹⁵ The school of Mosca, Pareto and Michels, otherwise, perceived the modern oligarchic tendencies as part and parcel of the dynamics of democracy, stating that “the principal cause of oligarchy in the democratic parties is to be found in the technical indispensability of

⁹³ Zoltán Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Interviuuri cu Henri H. Stahl*, București, Paideia, 2000, p. 151.

⁹⁴ *From Max Weber*, loc cit.

⁹⁵ Richard Pipes, “Max Weber and Russia”, *World Politics* 7: 3, 1955, pp. 371-401.

leadership”.⁹⁶ The Romanian theorists, by contrasts, formulated their indictments against the pseudo-capitalist and bureaucratic elite while agreeing that this one belonged together with an incipient and insufficient democratization. As for assessing the present relevance of the Romanian dilemmas about the ills of state-led attempts at capitalist modernization, it suffices to invoke the post-communist dilemmas about the feasibility of the capitalist project in a setting defined, once again, by the absence of an entrepreneurial bourgeois class. Those who argue optimistically that capitalism – of the managerial kind – can be built “without capitalists”⁹⁷ make their case by appropriating a historical interpretation of the bourgeois-capitalist development in Central and Eastern Europe based on a wider understanding of the bourgeois middle class, that places a heavy emphasis on the successful modernizing performances of its white-collar, non-entrepreneurial segment.⁹⁸ It is telling, in this connection, that the interwar Romanian corporatist theorist Mihail Manoilescu, driven by the ideological stance he adopted to argue for the feasibility of bourgeois survival after the decline of liberalism and capitalism, felt the need to make his case by the means of a piece of historical sociology based on the same broadening of the bourgeoisie’s definition as a class.⁹⁹

Definitely, as Albert Hirschman once argued, all that we can expect from intellectual history is “not to

⁹⁶ Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, transl. by Eden and Cedar Paul, New York, The Free Press, 1968 [1962], p. 364.

⁹⁷ Gil Eyal, Iván Szeléni, Eleanor Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: the New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*, New York, Verso, 1998.

⁹⁸ Jürgen Kocka, “The Middle Classes in Europe”, *The Journal of Modern History* 67: 4, 1995, pp. 783-806.

⁹⁹ Mihail Manoilescu, *Rostul și destinul burgheziei românești*, ed. de Leonard Oprea, București, Athena, 1997 [1943].

resolve issues, but to raise the level of the debate”.¹⁰⁰ The fragment of intellectual history here approached with the hindsight provided of Andrew Janos’ works cannot hope for a better fate.

¹⁰⁰ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 135.

Part III
Ideological Patterns and Canonical Histories

6. Subverting the Canon: Oligarchic Politics and Modernizing Optimism in Pre-communist Romania

Literary scholars in Romania have often addressed critically the canon of their field, intent on disclosing the patterns of canonization operating at various junctures in its development. The related domain of the history of political and social ideas has never constituted a focus for deconstructionist efforts of the kind. The article is an attempt to break the ground in this respect. It circumscribes a canon of ideological rightness that structures – to a very large extent without an accurate self-awareness – the specialized scholarship, while also having a significant impact much beyond it, into the entire welter of neighboring disciplines and broad cultural discourses. The interwar advocacy advanced by Ștefan Zeletin and Eugen Lovinescu in favor of modernization on the western model, in defense of dominant liberal policies harnessed to the same modernizing project and against the ideological expressions of traditionalist skepticism towards the later is identified as the main object of the mainstream interpretation thus delineated. In their turn, the interpretive views proposed by Z. Ornea from the 1960's to the 1990's are correspondingly underscored as most instrumental in creating the canon of the history of Romanian ideological dynamics. Praising the two pre-communist social and political writers as heroic and

Previous version in *New Europe College Yearbook* 2002-2003, pp. 281-328. A version delivered at the 32nd national convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), held at Denver, Colorado on November 9-12, 2000.

effective defenders of Enlightenment rationality against the assault of obscurantist anti-modern ideas – directly connected with interwar fascism but also insidiously appropriated on its behalf, later on, by the nationalist-communist rhetoric –, Ornea failed to offer a perceptive characterization of the same classics as defenders of oligarchic politics issuing from the adjustments suffered by western liberalism in the local setting, in order to suit the requirements of peripheral modernization. Once understanding, against the canon, the true nature of Zeletin's and Lovinescu's political thinking, we can take a critical departure from the legitimating historical accounts of the process of modernization they offered, and at the same time identify some other – hitherto neglected, but highly relevant – Romanian ideological stances pertaining to the family of intellectual liberalism.

1

Can one indicate precisely the moment when the figures of the literary critic Eugen Lovinescu and of the social analyst Ștefan Zeletin were established, in Romanian scholarship, as the quintessential examples of ideological “rightness” and intellectual honorability? A positive answer to this question could alter our general understanding of the pre-communist intellectual heritage of Romania.

As for Lovinescu, his disciples in the field of literary criticism were already numerous at the end of the pre-communist period,¹ and they did not avoid to pay homage to the person who had waged, from the first decade of the XXth century up to the 1940's, long intellectual wars

¹ An early work witnessing this influence: Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Tudor Vianu, *Istoria literaturii române moderne*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1985 [1943]. The range of the same influence is also displayed in *Dreptul la memorie*, ed. de Iordan Chimet, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, vols. 1-4, 1992-1993.

against nostalgic traditionalism and who most energetically claimed a literature with “urban” overtones and a “modernist” orientation, resonating with – and openly displaying its inspiration from – the most novel European trends of artistic experimentation. Still, Lovinescu’s accomplishments in the related field of social and political thinking were by far not as widely acclaimed at the time. When his most important work of this kind was published, in 1924-1926, it raised bitter criticisms from various ideological² camps. Presented as a sociological interpretation of the process of Romanian modernization since the beginning of the XIXth century, the impressive three-volumes *History of Modern Romanian Civilization*³ was most often accused – by both professional and self-styled sociologists – for sociological amateurism and naïveté, as well as for arbitrary intellectual syncretism and emphatic juxtaposition of theories, ideas and schools of thought.⁴ Lovinescu’s

² The notion of “ideology” is notoriously ambiguous. It is employed with a restrictive meaning from two perspectives: the Marxist and the conservative ones. See, for example, Jorge Larrain, “Ideology”, in Tom Bottomore et al., eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 219-223, respectively Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: the Pure Theory of Ideology*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985. I use it here with a broad meaning, resting on the basic idea that “political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist, causing a certain range of issues to appear problematic, and a corresponding range of questions to become the leading subjects of debate”, with the qualification that “this is no [...], however, [to] treat these ideological superstructures as a straightforward outcome of their social base”: see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1: *The Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. XI

³ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Minerva, vol. 1-3, 1992 [1924-1926].

⁴ The best testimony of this are Lovinescu’s own responses to such criticisms, see Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol 3: *Legile formației civilizației române*, pp. 7-34, 46-54.

rejoinders on this side were never conclusive, and the “hard” social thinkers of the age accordingly never accepted him as a fellow member of the profession or as a significant voice in the discipline.⁵

Outside this narrower circle, among the various authors who engaged in the ideological debates of the time, Lovinescu's ideas did not score much better either. The few works with a wider historical and comparative coverage published short before the installation of communism that claimed – more often than not undeservedly – the status of unbiased researches into the history of Romanian social and political ideas did indeed treat him as a significant representative of one major ideological orientation: together with Zeletin, Lovinescu was already seen as the thinker who had given the most vocal and effective argumentation for modernization on the western model.⁶ However, this very last intellectual attitude was either presented, in the same works, as a choice with no special claims to validity over the rival views of national social, cultural and political evolution, or dismissed from the standpoint of an indigenist or third-way conception of development.⁷

⁵ Many years afterwards, in the communist period, the most important survivor of the interwar sociological school could still not hide his contempt for Lovinescu's dilettantism: see Henri H. Stahl, *Gânditori și curente de istorie socială românească*, ed. de Paul H. Stahl, București, Editura Universității din București, 2001, pp. 217-218.

⁶ Traian Herseni, *Sociologia românească. Încercare istorică*, București, Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1940; Ion Zamfirescu, *Spiritualități românești*, ed. de Marin Diaconu, București, Vivaldi, 2001 [1941].

⁷ For a recent interesting restatement of the desirability of western-type modernization against the various schools of cultural relativism, by direct reference to Eastern Europe, see Daniel Chirot, “Returning to Reality: Culture, Modernization, and Various Eastern Europes: Why Functionalist-Evolutionary Theory Works”, *Tr@nsit-Virtuelles Forum* 21, 2002, pp. 1-13. See also Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London, Routledge, 1992.

Given the internal and international political constellation of the time, it is understandable that Lovinescu's advocacy of westernization, associated as it was with his avowed appreciation for "old-fashioned" liberal democracy, did not manage to attract in those years a large audience, and neither enthusiastic approvals from fellow social and political writers. Romania was not an exception in the general (Central and East) European drive to radical Right political solutions, of which radical nationalist rhetoric was a natural ingredient.⁸ When communism was installed, the political culture of the Right was reigning supreme in Romania. There was no time for the alternative discourses to recover, before any kind of free intellectual debate was interdicted. With a host of followers in literature and literary criticism that managed to maintain his influence alive even during the decades when his name and works could not be openly invoked or cited – or had to be used with extensive precaution –, Eugen Lovinescu was "rediscovered", together with a large part of the pre-communist national cultural heritage, in the period of the (relative) "liberalization" of the regime, starting with the mid 1960's.⁹ For obvious reasons, his social-political output – which contained polemical references to the doctrines of historical materialism – was recovered more reluctantly than the literary one. Still, this partial recovery was enough for starting to transform

⁸ Ivan Berend, *The Crisis Zone of Europe*, transl. by Adrienne Makkay-Chambers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986; Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 166-217.

⁹ A work that contributed significantly to this recovery: Ileana Vrancea, *Confruntări în critica deceniilor IV-VII. E. Lovinescu și posteritatea lui critică*, București, Cartea Românească, 1975.

Lovinescu into a genuine classic of Romanian political thinking.

The posthumous career of Zeletin's ideas was a bit different. Unlike Lovinescu, Zeletin was accepted, in the interwar period, as an original and provocative (however mistaken) social thinker, whose intellectual constructs – advanced in his two works *The Romanian Bourgeoisie* (1925) and *Neoliberalism* (1927)¹⁰ – had to be taken seriously and deserved to receive careful responses. Although trained as a philosopher, his credentials as a social analyst were not generally denied, and authors much better placed institutionally within the (emerging) discipline took pains to give detailed commentaries of his interventions.¹¹ As his political ideas resonated much better than Lovinescu's with the right-wing culture of the late thirties and of the forties, Zeletin was even occasionally eulogized as a giant of Romanian social thinking.¹² His professed disciples in the field were, however, not as numerous as the literary figures who closely followed Lovinescu. Then, in the first decades of communism, Zeletin – a much more resolute defender

¹⁰ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul său istoric*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Humanitas, 1991 [1925]; Idem, *Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Scripta, 1992 [1927].

¹¹ The most important such polemical reactions came from the part of the socialist and peasantist theorists. See Lotar Rădăceanu, "Oligarhia română. Studiu asupra istoriei capitalismului în România", *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 5: 3-4, 1924, pp. 497-532; 6: 1-2, 1926, pp. 160-184; 6: 3-4, 1927, pp. 435-459; Șerban Voinea, *Marxism oligarhic. Contribuție la problema dezvoltării capitaliste a României*, București, Editura Brănișteanu, 1926; Gheorghe Zane, "Burghezia română și marxismul", *Viața românească* 19: 2, 1927, pp. 244-260; 19: 3, 1927, pp. 323-334; Virgil Madgearu, *Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism*, ed. de Ludovic Bathory, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1999 [1936].

¹² Valeriu D. Bădiceanu, *Ștefan Zeletin, doctinar al burgheziei românești*, București, n. p., 1943.

than Lovinescu of the social and economic arrangements of “bourgeois” Romania – was energetically criticized as a philosopher of plutocracy.¹³ The beginning of his recovery was due to the gradual process of reinserting the nationalist dimension into historiography:¹⁴ praising the *status quo* of the capitalist society, Zeletin nevertheless presented a positive view of the pre-communist modernization story. His strivings to de-dramatize the history of the XIXth century and to present it as a success story fit well with the widespread ideological strategy of the time which consisted in fusing the tenets of the nationalist and Marxist historical views, by presenting the advent of the socialist society as the fulfillment of the entire record of a centuries-long heroic past – across which the internal emancipation of the socially exploited classes went hand in hand with the struggles of the entire nation against encroachments by foreign powers. In the end, Zeletin joined Lovinescu as a classic of the most “valid” brand of social-political thinking produced in Romania before 1945.¹⁵

¹³ Characteristic for this condemnation is Ernő Gall, *Sociologia burgheză din România. Studii critice*, ed. a II-a, București, Editura Politică, 1963. See also Miron Constantinescu, Ovidiu Bădina, Ernő Gall, *Sociological Thought in Romania*, transl. by Silviu Brucan, Bucharest, Meridiane, 1974.

¹⁴ For these transformations of the Romanian historiography see Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români 1944-1977*, ed. de Radu Popa, București, Humanitas, 1991; Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București, Humanitas, 1997; Florin Constantiniu, *De la Răutu și Roller la Mușat și Ardeleanu*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2007.

¹⁵ The best expression of this consecration of the two figures as classics of social-political thinking is Z. Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980. Also characteristic for the canon invoked: Constantin Ciopraga, *Literatura română dintre 1900 și 1918*, Iași, Junimea, 1970; Ov. S. Chohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, București, Minerva, vols. 1-3, 1972-1975;

It might seem paradoxical that the scholarship produced in the communist period managed to do for Zeletin and Lovinescu, the two pre-communist “official” defenders of capitalist modernization, precisely what the pre-communist scholarship never accomplished in a clear fashion: namely, to elevate them to the status of classics. This revaluation of the two intellectual figures derived most naturally, however, from the general structure of the interpretations provided by the scholarship in question.

2

As emerged during the communist years, the dominant presentation of the pre-communist period in the history of ideological trends in Romania consisted in placing them along an axis whose ends were defined by different pairs of terms whose classificatory meaning was virtually the same. “Modernism” was opposed to “traditionalism”, in the same way as “progressive” thinking stood in opposition to the “reactionary” one, and “rationalist” tendencies were contrasted to the “irrationalist” philosophical views. The classical dichotomy between Left and Right was superimposed upon these couples of opposite notions. Thinkers gravitating towards the first of the two poles mentioned – that of the Left, of rationalism and progressivism – were supporters of industrialization and defended forms of cultural expression with an “urban” resonance. Those who stood closer to the other pole – that of the Right, of irrationalism and of reaction – promoted a view of economic development based on agriculture, being

Dumitru Micu, *Gândirea și gândirismul*, București, Minerva, 1975. A recent restatement of the same stance: Bogdan Murgescu, “Introduction”, in Bogdan Murgescu, ed., *Romania and Europe. Modernization as Temptation, Modernization as Threat*, Bucharest, ALLFA & Edition Körber Stiftung, 2000, pp. 1-12.

at the same time vocal admirers of the cultural universe of the village.

The way the positions along the ideological axis were distributed among authors and intellectual currents is not difficult to guess. There could be no doubt, before 1989, which thinkers and ideological tendencies best embodied the ideas and values associated with left-wing progressiveness: they were the Marxists, and among them, of course, especially the communists. Extreme right-wing reaction was incarnated by the obscurantist defenders of tradition, who made use of religion and of the mystics of the soil as intellectual materials of their theories. Somewhat more desirable than them were the moderate conservatives, or the *Junimists*: although not enthusiasts of industrial modernization, they were nevertheless content with the parliamentary regime and held reasonable views of cultural and economic development. The place immediately to the Right of the socialists was being contended, however, by two categories of authors. Both the “official” modernists and the populists-peasantists¹⁶ presented good credentials for this position on the “hierarchy” of ideological tendencies. By comparison to the first group, the populists were more “democratically” inclined, and therefore had better claims to be ascribed a place closer to the Left pole. At the same time, however, they were skeptical about industrialization

¹⁶ The term “populism” refers, here, to an ideology of development: see, for example, David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: a Study in Social Dogmatism*, New York, Collier Books, 1961 [1951]; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1969]; It is sometimes used, however, as a synonym for semi-fascism: Joseph Held, ed., *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1996; Ivan Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1998, pp. 76-83.

and cherished the dream of propelling Romania on the path of progress in the framework of an agrarian economy. It was generally accepted, to be sure, that their agrarian views were motivated by purely “pragmatic” considerations, having nothing in common with the “romantic” nostalgia for the village universe characteristic to the traditionalists of the Right. Still, their inability to understand that industrialization was the unavoidable fate of modern societies made of them dubious protagonists of modern public life, and linked them to those trends of thought which were to become most easily associated with fascism and the radical Right.

The “modernists” – who spoke in favor of the National Liberal Party’s strategy of modernization – were identified, in the main, with a liberal political view in the generic sense of the term,¹⁷ being preferred to most of the other contenders of the ideological spectrum. Indeed, while not scoring as well as the Marxists when placed on the modernist/ rationalist/ progressive *vs.* traditionalist/ irrationalist/ reactionary evaluative axis, the two “bourgeois” ideologues Lovinescu and Zeletin

¹⁷ For the migration from West to East of liberal ideas and politics and their corresponding adjustments, see Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1957; George Fischer, *Russian Liberalism: from Gentry to Intelligentsia*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958; Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism: Vladimir Jovanovic and the Transformation of Serbian Politics*, Seattle, The University of Washington Press, 1975; Victoria F. Brown, “The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: the Case of Romanian Liberalism”, in Stephen Fischer-Galati, et al., eds., *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1982, pp. 269-301; Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004. See also Douglas Howland, “Translating Liberty in Nineteenth Century Japan”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62: 1, 2001, pp. 161-189.

nevertheless fell on the good side, when measured with the help of it. They were indeed not militants for social justice – and neither were they as energetic advocates of extensive democratization as the agrarian populists and the peasantists –, but they reasonably qualified as supporters of the constitutional system and of personal freedom, defending them against the obscurantist forces of the radical Right – comparing well even with the moderate conservatives on the same ground. While not very far, thus, from the Marxists, with respect to their political wisdom, they virtually identified with them with respect to their economic wisdom: supporting industrialization and urbanization, they pleaded for precisely the economic structure that the Marxist theory indicated as the only conceivable basis of progress under the aegis of socialism.

Moreover, the good score obtained by Zeletin and Lovinescu in this confrontation of ideological symbols was also due to the prevailing disqualifying of the available protagonists. Indeed, neither of the thinkers and ideological currents of the Left – the only significant competitors – was appropriate for a very emphatic consecration as a classic. On the one hand, both the social democrats and the populists exhibited “revisionist” interpretations of Marxism¹⁸ – as seen from the standpoint of the rigid historical materialism of the time – that could be perceived, in the end, as more insidious ideological poisons than the frank bourgeois advocacy of the Liberal apologists. On the other hand, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the only intellectual representative of the

¹⁸ Some attempts to dissociate the original content of Marxism from its later re-elaborations: John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, London, Longmans, 1954; Raymond Aron, *Le marxisme de Marx*, ed. par Jean-Claude Casanova and Christian Bachelier, Paris, Éditions de Fallois, 2002.

Komintern brand of Marxism in pre-1945 Romania,¹⁹ could never be entirely appropriated by the regime due to the embarrassing episode of his purging, in the 1950's. There was a void place left, thus, in the very center of the communist ideological pantheon that the official modernists Lovinescu and Zeletin were called upon to fill.

The kind of scholarship that we referred to above was of the soundest kind produced during the communist period. It was also of the sort whose ideological bent resonates best with our post-communist intellectual concerns related to creating a liberal-democratic order. And this is so because the revaluation of pre-communist modernism during the period of communism responded not only to the need to retrospectively criticize interwar fascism, but also to the (related) need – intensely felt by significant parts of the intellectual opinion of the time – to oppose the perverse discourse of chauvinistic nationalism officially promoted by the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.²⁰ As a response to this pressure, there got constituted, at the time, the intellectual strategy – embraced by a part of the university and publishing establishment – of looking at the pair of interwar “modernists” Lovinescu and Zeletin as to the perfect antidote against the isolationist tendencies recurrent in Romanian culture and to present them, together with a score of several other figures – of which a large part were disciples of the former – as both the symbols and the fountainhead of all cultural attitudes opposed to isolationism, xenophobia, fear of change and rejection of modernity.

¹⁹ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Problemele de bază ale României*, București, Socec & Co., 1944; Idem, *Un veac de frământări sociale, 1821-1907*, București, Editura Politică, 1969 [1945]; Idem, *Sub trei dictaturi*, București, Editura Politică, 1970 [1944].

²⁰ One of the earliest approaches to the topic: George Schöpfung, “Rumanian Nationalism”, *Survey* 20: 1, 1974, pp. 77-104.

This tendency has got only radicalized after 1989. The picture presented above has been altered in the most representative works of intellectual history with a wider coverage produced in the post-communist period by further elevating the “official” modernists to the position of the supreme instances of truth in Romanian culture, this time to the detriment of their adversaries of both the Right and the Left.²¹ Besides, the general tendency now has been to expel from the historical account the left-wing component of the ideological spectrum, as also the social-economic layer of the ideological debate, by concentrating instead on the genealogy of Romanian fascism²² and on the trends of anti-western nationalism that had been incorporated into the nationalist-communist synthesis and its post-communist avatars.²³

²¹ Most characteristic is Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995. Other examples: Adrian Marino, *Pentru Europa. Integrarea României. Probleme ideologice și culturale*, Iași, Polirom, 1995; Idem, *Politică și cultură. Pentru o nouă cultură română*, Iași, Polirom, 1996; Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și „problema evreiască”. Eseu despre formele antisemitismului intelectual în România anilor '30*, București, Humanitas, 1995; Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*; Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat sau “Schimbarea la față a României”*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1999; Virgil Nemoianu, *România și liberalismele ei*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2000.

²² See the books cited above by Ornea, Volovici, Petreu; See also Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român*, București, Univers, 1998; Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie și naționalism. Paradoxul Noica*, București, Humanitas, 1998; George Voicu, *Mitul Nae Ionescu*, București, Ars Docendi, 2000; Matei Călinescu, “The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugène Ionesco)”, *East European Politics and Societies* 15: 3, 2001, pp. 649-677.

²³ A very consistent approach to the successive transformations of Romanian nationalism, from pre- to post-communism: Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in Interwar Romania”, in Ivo Banac, Katherine Verdery, eds., *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, New

Of the types of works that contributed to shaping this argumentative structure, by far the most significant were those intended not as historical accounts devoted to various disciplines, but as general – and, as such, by definition “interdisciplinary” – explorations into the development of ideological tendencies and intellectual currents. And of the authors who wrote in this vein, it goes without saying that the hugely prolific Z. Ornea stands out as the most important, due not only to his massive output, but also to the documentary soundness, coherence, clarity and literary value of his works. Trained as a sociologist but cohabitating, for the longest part of his career, with the community of literary historians, this author came closest of all exegetes of Romanian culture to offering a global investigation of the interrelationships between literary, philosophical, sociological and economic ideas that confronted and influenced each other along the path of the intellectual debates of the period 1860-1945. His books of synthesis give general presentations of *Junimism*,²⁴ of the vision of cultural nationalism that developed, before the First World War, around the journal *Sămănătorul*,²⁵ of the socialist thought of the same period²⁶ and of the left-wing agrarian ideology of populism-peasantism.²⁷ The interwar period – also

Haven, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995, pp. 103-133; Idem, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1991; Idem, “Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania”, *Slavic Review* 52: 2, 1993, pp. 179-203..

²⁴ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1975.

²⁵ Idem, *Sămănătorismul*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998 [1970].

²⁶ Idem, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul*, București, Minerva, 1977; Idem, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, București, Cartea Românească, 1983.

²⁷ Idem, *Țărănismul. Studiu sociologic*, București, Editura Politică, 1969; Idem, *Poporanismul*, București, Minerva, 1972.

touched on in the book on peasanism cited above – was approached by him in a somewhat different manner, being treated in two works intended to offer general accounts of the intellectual debates in the 1920's and 1930's, respectively.²⁸ Besides a large amount of articles compiled in a series of volumes (and of which some were first published as introductory studies to his many editions of classical texts) and several biographical works devoted to the figures of Titu Maiorescu, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Constantin Stere – the founding figures of the *Junimist*, socialist and populist intellectual currents respectively – he approached the social, economical and political ideas of the hardly classifiable thinker A. D. Xenopol.²⁹

In order to comprehend how Ornea's ideas – symptomatic, as already said, for a large part of the Romanian scholarship – changed after the demise of communism, a comparison between the two books devoted to the 1920's and 1930's is very enlightening. What it shows is that he did not significantly modify his general framework of interpretation. As expected, the major revisions that appeared referred to the treatment of Marxist thinking: while before 1989 the socialist and communist authors stood as the best incarnation of progressive and “modernist” ideas, with the official “modernists” Zeletin and Lovinescu and the populists/peasantists occupying the position next to the right of them, now Zeletin and Lovinescu started to be celebrated, without any qualifications, as both liberal thinkers and as the only cogent analysts of modernization. In more general terms, while the blame put on the intellectual currents of the reactionary or

²⁸ Idem, *Tradiționalism și modernitate*; Idem, *Anii treizeci*.

²⁹ N. Gogoneață, Z. Ornea, A. D. Xenopol. *Concepția socială și filozofică*, București, Editura Științifică, 1965.

radical Right was maintained, the left-wing ideas were depreciated – as compared to the previous works –, with a corresponding revaluation of the liberal center. Unfortunately, this re-positioning of cultural symbols was accompanied by a very visible tendency to avoid approaching some topics that would have required extensive interpretative revisions, and by thus dropping out of the historical account large sections of the historical record of intellectual history. Indeed, while *Tradiționalism și modernitate* is broad and ambitious in scope, paying equal attention to social-economic as well as to literary-philosophical debates and trying to give a complete picture of the intellectual concerns and intellectual trends of the age, *Anii treizeci* is quite narrowly focused on the rise of the “extreme Right” and on the reactions this phenomenon raised among the thinkers of a different orientation. Marxist authors do not feature at all as protagonists of the book, the peasantists are also left aside, social-economic issues are neglected. The general impression one gets, after this comparison, is that Ornea – together with his fellow Romanian researchers – avoided to make the effort to re-comprehend, in post-communist terms, the problems connected with the sociological and economic component of the pre-communist doctrines and ideological currents, as well as to discover a new, post-totalitarian “language”, fit for presenting the vagaries of the Romanian Left.

3

To contend the need of revising a cultural canon is certainly a far-reaching and risky enterprise. Yet, the present article advances the claim that such a reconfiguration of the canon described above in broad outline is indeed needed and moreover derives inescapably from adopting a perspective on the field which yields into disclosing certain elements of it that

have constantly been missed from the previous historical pictures. The field of our research is represented by the entire record of thinking on modernization, national identity and political programs voiced over the period comprised between the publication by Titu Maiorescu in 1868 of his seminal article “Against the Present Direction in Romanian Culture”³⁰ – that inaugurated a new mode of discussing the problems connected with the adjustment of local society to the embracing modern civilization – and the last occurrences of free intellectual exchanges taking place before the installation of the official communist discourse, in 1947.³¹ And the new perspective that we vindicate rests on the demand to highlight a central thread running through all such debates of the time: namely, the ideological struggle waged over the issue of assessing the performances of the political establishment in charge of the modernizing policies.

In other words, we vindicate the need to grasp the interconnection between two types of theorizing that have most often developed hand in hand, but whose histories have tended to be told separately. The first of these intellectual debates was concerned with the character of the Romanian political establishment and of the society over which it ruled. The second of them was concerned with the relationship between this society and the larger world (or, in other words, the relationship between Romanian society and the modern western civilization). Faced with the challenge of modernization on the western model, Romanian intellectuals debated the prospects of westernization and at the same time assessed the

³⁰ Titu Maiorescu, “În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română” [1868], in *Critice*, ed. de Domnica Filimon, București, Elion, 2000 [1908], pp. 161-170.

³¹ We can indicate the books by Pătrășcanu cited above as marking the end of the pre-communist debate on modernization.

behavior of the modernizing elite. They spoke about the danger that the national culture might be dissolved under the impact of foreign influences, while at the same time blaming the ruling strata for the wrong way the process of cultural importations was being conducted. They discussed about the effects that the spread of western capitalist market had on local peasant economy, criticizing the indigenous economic elite for its role as an agent of global capitalism. They despaired over the bad prospects of development of the national industry, condemning the dominant classes for their wrong approach to the objective of industrialization. We claim that, in order to be more historically sensitive, our historical account has to take as the main target the connection between the narrower critique of the elite and the larger topics of social and cultural criticism, those concerned with the adjustment or a backward society to the modern world.

To be sure, several more “specialized” debates were involved in this ideological conversation. Genuine or self-styled experts made technical analyses and offered technical solutions for the problems of industry or agriculture. Constitutional jurists studied the functioning of institutions and the legal system. The specialists of the field, and virtually everybody besides them, debated the right balance that had to be observed, in literature and art, between foreign fashions and national traditions. There is no question to follow all these debates in detail. Instead, our focus is placed, first, on those authors, texts and intellectual currents that display a general characterization of the political system, in terms of its peculiarities by comparison to the developed countries of the West, which were taken, by the theorists in question, as a model of “normal” development; and, second, on the most general conceptions regarding the issue of national identity and the patterns of social-economic development.

We intend to set the debate about the ruling “oligarchy” against the background of the larger debate about modernization and models of development. Or, in other words, we take a new look at the debate about Romanian developmental peculiarities, by focusing on the narrower debate about who was responsible – and to what extent – for all the deplorable features of peripheral development.

The conversation reconstructed in this way is interesting not only for the historian of the process of modernization, but also from the standpoint of a more “regular” political history of Romania. Besides their intellectual sophistication, the topics involved in it were the ones most hotly and intensely debated in the country during that period of time, constituting the privileged ideological references for parties and political groups and marking the dividing lines between contending political factions. Romanian intellectuals *spoke* about many things during these decades; they actually *debated*, however, only about a limited number of them. If we accept that the task of the historian of political ideas is to engage into a “wide-ranging investigation of the changing political languages in which societies talk to themselves”,³² we are led to claim that the path of research indicated above can best help us to understand the way this self-examination of Romanian society proceeded, from the time of the foundation of the political regime of constitutional monarchy, in the 1860’s, up to the installation of communism. In other words, we think that precisely by studying the relationship between

³² Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 105. See also Idem, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”, *History and Theory* 8: 1, 1969, pp. 3-53; Bhikhu Parekh, R. N. Berki, “The History of Political Thought: a Critique of Q. Skinner’s Methodology”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34: 2, 1973, pp. 163-184; James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988.

the debate on modernization, the discussion on domestic political issues in terms of a general characterization of the political system and the political values adopted by various authors one can better grasp the core issues, ideas and concepts around which the ideological orientations were built, in Romania, during the period under coverage and one can better identify “what was actually discussed” by influential intellectual groups in a country where the recurrently occurring, intensely debated and politically relevant topics that feature in the public discourses tend to differ from those prevailing in the West.

Because domestic political issues were debated – at a more elevated level – in terms of the modernizing performances of the ruling elite and because political projects were advocated by reference to the failures of modernization, we consider that we are justified in using such terms as “social criticism” and “political thinking” as interchangeable, in order to refer to the ideological trends in view. “Political theory” in a more technical sense of the notion – that is, the kind of inquiry into political values and norms that goes under this name in the standard works of Western intellectual history – was of a lesser importance in Romania at the time. As in all countries of “belated modernization”, westernization was perceived as the most pressing intellectual challenge and political matters were accordingly discussed primarily in relation to the urgencies of social-economic reform, or of the building or conservation of the national culture, much rather than by reference to abstract philosophical principles.

It does not follow from this that intellectual concerns that can more easily be included under the rubric of “political theory” were completely absent at the time. Sometimes they were openly exhibited, but most often they were inscribed in the texture of social and cultural criticism of the kind we have spoken about so

far. Moreover, philosophical options were to a great extent determined by the more fundamental options made by the respective authors within the range of the interconnected debates on modernization and the modernizing elite. A further task of our approach is, correspondingly, that of better disclosing the properly political views held by the authors in question.

This last kind of research is actually the one whose need has most intensely been felt over the post-communist period. The exit from totalitarianism and the attempt to erect – or resurrect – a liberal-democratic political regime has been accompanied by a search for an indigenous tradition of liberal-democratic thought. There has emerged a widespread opinion that the importation of recent theories from abroad is to be joined by the effort to “sanitize” the heritage of Romanian political thought and to sharply dissociate between those elements of it that can be accommodated with a desirable political system – contributing as such to creating a political culture propitious to it – and those that are unpropitious for the project of political reform. We think that it is precisely our more detailed anatomy and more careful classification of the ideological trends that can help us to better characterize the political conceptions of the pre-communist thinkers and eventually to identify intellectual alternatives that have hitherto been neglected.

4

The labels under which were placed the protagonists of the first of the two ideological struggles referred to above – that on modernization in abstract terms – are common to the history of most countries in the area.³³ From the

³³ Roumen Daskalov, “Ideas About, and Reactions to Modernization in the Balkans”, *East European Quarterly* 31: 2, 1997, pp. 141-180; Chantal Delsol, Michel Maslowski, dirs., *Histoire des idées politiques de l'Europe Centrale*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de

Right, various brands of conservatives and indigenist nationalists condemned the rapid introduction of western institutions and practices, on the view that they had broken the course of “natural” or “organic” social evolution.³⁴ From the Left, socialists and populists criticized labor relationships in agriculture and the inefficiency of the industrial sector. A “traditionalist” component was openly exhibited by all these intellectual currents except socialism, while it was sometimes argued at the time that this last one also displayed a strange tendency of longing nostalgically for the traditional ways.³⁵ Finally, there existed, of course, a trend of “official” westernism or “bourgeois” modernism, which met the challenge of the contestations from both Right and Left, offering retrospective and prospective justifications for the advancement of modernity to the detriment of the traditional world – as well as for the continuation of the modernization processes under the aegis of a non-socialist political regime.

France, 1998; Iván Zoltán Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006.

³⁴ For the genesis of organicist thinking see Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: a Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. and transl. by David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986; For its adoption in the Romanian setting: Al. Zub, “Ranke și directiva organicistă în cultura română”, in *Istorie și finalitate*, București, Editura Academiei, 1991, pp. 109-122. For the intermingling between organicism and sociological evolutionism: Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: a Study in Nineteenth-century Thought*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1971, pp. 141-269. Again for the Romanian adoption: Al. Zub, “Impactul bucklean în cultura română”, in *Cunoaștere de sine și integrare*, Iași, Junimea, 1986, pp. 152-166.

³⁵ As argued at the time by the populist thinker Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească*, ed. de Rodica Rotaru și Alexandru Piru, Chișinău, Litera, 1997 [1909, 1922], pp. 161-172.

When we look, next, at the second of our inter-related ideological debates – the one related to the modernizing elite –, we can notice that the contending camps were still more sharply differentiated. It emerges that, from very early on, a part of the political spectrum was targeted by various social critics as constituting the “core” of the ruling elite and started to be identified with it in general terms. More precisely, the National Liberal Party, officially founded in 1875, but whose antecedents went back as far as the period of the “preparation” for the revolution of 1848 – and itself built around the powerful family of the Brătianus –, was taken to incarnate a certain approach to modernization, inaugurated in the first half of the XIXth century and never abandoned – so the argument went – by the Romanian establishment. Before 1918, the liberals were attacked from Right and Left, by critics placed on different layers of society and using arguments of various sorts – but whose ideological orientations can be classified under the four rubrics of (*Junimist*) “conservatism”, (autochtonist) “nationalism”, “socialism” and “populism”. The Conservative Party, founded in 1880 but having older historical antecedents, was considered, by the representatives of the last three ideological trends, as sharing with the liberals the guilt for the failures of modernization and for the unjust structure of society. Still, all critics agreed that, as the fortunes of the conservatives had never stopped to decrease to the benefit of the other party of the “oligarchy”, a sound social analysis had to concentrate on the constitutive principles and the functioning of the liberal establishment.

After the First World War, this criticism of the liberal-dominated oligarchy³⁶ was met by arguments

³⁶ For an approach to oligarchic politics in another East European context see Andrew C. Janos, “The Decline of Oligarchy:

meant to offer a defense of it. They gave rise, in their turn, to reinforcements of the arguments provided by the old schools of social-political thinking, and to new types of criticism. The ideological spectrum was modified, partly under the influence of wider European trends of thought.³⁷ The conservative school virtually disappeared as a significant voice (although we can follow its survival in the works of an individual author from the old generation, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru). Autochtonist nationalism gradually adopted the political stance of the radical Right, being appropriated, in the end, by fascism. Populism was rejuvenated as peasantism. The socialism movement split into social democracy and communism, each of them with a peculiar intellectual discourse. Corporatist ideas gained ground, one of the representatives of this doctrine – Mihail Manoilescu – eventually becoming a figure of European and world notoriety.³⁸

Before 1918, skepticism towards westernization was deeply interconnected with the criticism of the National Liberal Party, as the main agent of westernization. Anti-liberal arguments acquired a specific traditionalist resonance, while traditionalism came to be associated with

Bureaucratic and Mass Politics in the Age of Dualism”, in Andrew C. Janos, William B. Slottman, eds., *Revolution in Perspective: Essays on the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1971, pp. 1-61.

³⁷ For the intellectual trends of the age, see: H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: the Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930*, New York, Octagon Books, 1976 [1958]; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The Age of Ideologies: a History of Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, transl. by Ewald Osers, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984.

³⁸ For the range of this notoriety see Philippe. C. Schmitter, “Still the Century of Corporatism?”, *The Review of Politics* 36: 1, 1974, pp. 85-131; Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 71-98.

a negative stance taken towards the liberals. This is why the pro-liberal arguments that developed, after 1918, in response to the previous social criticism – being associated mainly with the figures of Lovinescu and Zeletin –, spoke the language of modernism and anti-traditionalism, while the westernizer ideas embraced by the same thinkers came to be seen as inseparable from their pro-liberal apologetics. The two varieties of argumentation – in favor of westernization and, respectively, in praise of the westernizer practices of the liberal elite – are so strongly linked in the works of Lovinescu and Zeletin that we have come to look at the connection between them as to a matter of logical necessity. As modernizing skepticism – together with socialist criticism – was intimately linked with targeting the oligarchy for the failures of modernization and for the mistaken way the predicament of adopting the western model was approached in Romania, so modernizing optimism has come to be epitomized by authors, like Lovinescu and Zeletin, who tightly associated a modernist stance with an apology of the same oligarchy, systematically defending it against all previous criticism. As such, this last intellectual attitude has tended to be considered as the only form in which bourgeois modernism was voiced in pre-communist Romania. Against this widely shared view, we argue that, alongside the anti-traditionalist and anti-Marxist authors that subscribed to the mainstream social-political developments, offering a rationalization for them, in the vein of Lovinescu and Zeletin, there could be heard at the time some voices that have subsequently been forgotten and missed from the record of intellectual history: a score of political authors who conjoined a vocal opposition to nationalist traditionalist and anti-western cultural trends, and a critical departure from the Marxist designs, with a no less resolute criticism of mainstream politics,

considered as the root of social distortions and as the cause of political extremism of the Right and of the Left. We set out to bring to light and sharply characterize this family of thinkers, by placing it on the ideological map of the time. Before proceeding with this, however, we shall first have to take a brief look at the inner logic of both the arguments leveled by the “critical culture”³⁹ against the establishment and those provided by Lovinescu and Zeletin for its defense.

5

The main blame put by the different political writers on the Romanian ruling stratum was the fact that it was not true to its professed self-definition. The elite of the National Liberal Party recommended itself as the representative of a bourgeois middle class, the main agent of global capitalism in Romania, with the mission of propelling the country on the path of development characteristic to modern societies. In fact, as social critics argued, the members of the political establishment were only the representatives of a class of bureaucrats, making their living on the spoils of the state and manipulating the state apparatus to their own benefit. The principle of social cohesion of the elite was not given by the role its members played in the economic process, but by the position they occupied within the state structure. Moreover, to the extent that they did play an economic role at all, this one was dependent on their entrenched political power. The industry they manned was not a genuine one – able to survive by the sheer mechanisms of

³⁹ Let us underline that the notion of “critical culture” was recurrent in the debates of the time: see, Ștefan Zeletin, “Romantismul german și cultura critică română” [1929], in *Neoliberalismul*, pp. 55-72. A work which put its imprint on the notion is Ilie Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critică românească*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984.

the free market – but an artificial one, kept alive by protectionist policies and state subsidies. And the agrarian economy largely dominated by the same class of false bourgeois and state functionaries was a semi-feudal one, particular mixture of medieval and modern elements. The peasants, laboring under economic and legal conditions that brought together the evils of both feudal serfdom and capitalism, but enjoying none of their benefits, had to bear on their shoulders the heavy state apparatus, fashioned on the model of western states, but superimposed on a primitive society and a feeble economy. The fiscal system functioned in such a way as to systematically drive away the national wealth from the society at large, and to direct it to the small bureaucratic oligarchy and to the nascent faked industry created to its sole benefit.

A virtual “sociological theory” about the hidden character of the Romanian oligarchy was put forward, thus, by the political authors belonging to the four ideological camps of the “critical culture”. The components of this theory did not appear all at once, but entered the intellectual scene successively. They were present within the texture of all ideological discourses, but not always fully elaborated. They were sometimes held by authors not entirely conscious of the intellectual traditions they shared with many of their devoted allies and some of their avowed ideological rivals. Our historical reconstruction of this general view of Romanian state and society has to proceed, therefore, by the means of a careful identification and gathering together of small pieces of theory and intellectual building blocks spread across various utterances belonging to all parts of the ideological spectrum. It can only be an

exercise in grasping the “tacit dimension”⁴⁰ of an age in the intellectual history of Romania – that is, of the entire welter of assumptions and semi-articulated ideas and presuppositions, cherished by most of the participants in the ideological conversation of the time.

When approached in this way, the four “ideologies of opposition” that criticized the establishment before and after the First World War will appear as much more unitary on the side of their descriptive sociology than previous historical accounts have presented them. They diverged mainly when moving from social analysis to projects of social and political reform. The alternative models of development they offered were based, however, on much the same ideas about the existing characteristics of Romanian society: over-bureaucratization, oligarchic politics, semi-feudal agriculture and imitative culture: this was the diagnostic of Romanian society posed, by employing various terms and deploying different accents, by the social critics that undertook the task of exploring in depth the dilemma of Romanian modernization. Foremost, there stood the overarching idea that the social and political elite of the time had to be characterized as neither “feudal” nor “bourgeois”, but rather as a social configuration with no counterpart in the historical experience of the West, its cohesion being determined by the participation of its members in the bureaucratic machine, together with the tendency of the state apparatus itself to act as an instrument of income extraction to the exclusive benefit of the political class.

The intellectual matrix from which the sociological analyses targeting the oligarchy were derived was the famous theory of “forms without substance”. The basic

⁴⁰ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 69.

idea – first formulated by the conservative *Junimists* and their intellectual leader Maiorescu in the article already mentioned – that Romanian society was evolving in a distorted fashion, due to the uncritical grafting of western “forms” onto a society unprepared to sustain, to assimilate them, or to enable them to function according to their original (western) design, pervaded the entire intellectual history of Romania until the Second World War. First formulated by reference to the problem of cultural imitation, it soon acquired a dimension of social analysis and criticism. Alongside their vindication of cultural authenticity, the *Junimists* claimed a Romanian social order in accordance with its cultural environment. Condemning the falsification of western ideas in the Romanian setting, they underscored the social dysfunctions produced by the demagogical politics that made use of the very same ideas. Indicating the liberals as the main representatives of this type of politics, they sometimes depicted them as naïve enthusiasts of modernization and some other times as cynical professionals of the political industry. While themselves prominent participants in the political game – or at least members of the “political class”, in the most general sense of the term –, they were the initiators of a discourse of social criticism that was to be taken over, later on, by political writers originating from outside the circle of wealth and power. Turned to more radical uses and infused with a more “populist” and “democratic” spirit, these ideas, born within the confines of political conservatism, were to become – after corresponding re-elaborations – the meeting-ground of social reformers of all persuasions and the rallying-point of both left-wing and right-wing revolutionaries.

Disclosing the underlying unity of the critical culture leads us to question, once again, certain deep-sited

tendencies prevalent in the scholarship on the topic. The point is made, this time, by reference to not only the Romanian scholarship but also to the foreign literature that has approached the Romanian and East European pre-communist heritage of social thought from the standpoint of international “development studies”, on the view that the East European periphery has shared important structural features with the non-European regions of the world, all of them evolving on paths of development different from the one followed by the West.⁴¹ Most of this last kind of scholarship tends to give a good assessment of the sociological wisdom displayed by left-wing (socialist and populist) authors,⁴² but equally to disregard their larger cultural and ideological setting and eventually to dismiss as irrelevant the insights given by their ideological rivals from the Right. At the same time, in so far as it has embarked on the task of advancing evaluative judgments concerning the old schools of social criticism, Romanian scholarship has either tended to

⁴¹ Some relevant titles: Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951]; Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant*; Michael Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53: 131, 1975, pp. 248-271; Idem, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 55: 1, 1977, pp. 65-89; Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978; Daniel Chirot, “Ideology, Reality, and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars”, *East European Politics and Societies* 3: 3, 1989, pp. 378-411; Love, *Crafting the Third World*.

⁴² See especially Daniel Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development: the Zeletin-Voinea Debate Concerning Romania’s Prospects in the 1920’s and Its Contemporary Importance”, in Jowitt, ed. *Social Change in Romania*, pp. 31-52,

concur with the same views⁴³ or, on the contrary, it has tended to downplay the “skeptical modernizers” to the benefit of the modernist apologists – invoking either the reactionary leanings of the former ones⁴⁴ or their Marxist heterodoxy.⁴⁵ Subscribing to the above-mentioned literature with a development studies perspective in terms of validating the “critical” sociologists against their “apologetic” rivals, we are led to underline the fact that the basic recurrent ideas of the “critical culture” were born, in Romania, within the headquarters of the political Right: emerged in the footsteps of the conservative school of *Junimea*, they became the common ground of all ideological orientations. Sometimes conjoined with proposals of reform and political solutions that certainly look unacceptable with the hindsight of the XXth century’s experience, they still encapsulate an intimate understanding of the predicament of Romanian modernization.

6

Of the pair of classical authors who epitomize the modernist attitude – and of the score of lesser figures who wrote in the same vein – Ștefan Zeletin was certainly the one whose works most openly display and most systematically elaborate a chain of arguments meant to offer an apology of the modernizing elite. Zeletin’s stance of an ideological defender of the National Liberal Party does not need to be read between the lines. On the contrary, it is emphatically adopted as an official

⁴³ See for example Stahl, *Gânditori și curente de istorie socială românească*. Of great relevance is Zoltán Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Interviuuri cu Henri H. Stahl*, București, Paideia, 2000.

⁴⁴ A revealing example is Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, pp. 194–197.

⁴⁵ Revealing examples: Ornea, *Poporanismul*; Idem, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*. See also Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Poporanismul și mișcarea socialistă din România*, București, Editura Politică, 1988.

position, by this author who stroke one of his commentators as “an unalloyed example of Antonio Gramsci’s ‘organic intellectual’, providing an elaborate rationalization of the existing distribution of wealth and power”.⁴⁶ Zeletin can best be credited for giving wide currency, in Romanian political parlance, to the very term “oligarchy”, as a designation of the modernizing establishment and as the most convenient catchword for cursorily describing its authoritarian and interventionist policies. Accepting the argument of the previous social critics that the Romanian oligarchy was something different from the western bourgeoisie, Zeletin sets out to offer retrospective justifications for all these differences. He presents the apparently non-capitalist behavior of the self-professed Romanian capitalists as the only possible strategy by the means of which genuine capitalism could have been introduced to the country, explaining all the other reprehensible features of the social-political system as unavoidable side-effects of the best possible long-term approach to westernization, that in the near future would be recognized by everybody as episodes of the glorious record of progress. Sometimes, Zeletin’s ambition to offer final refutations to all the arguments advanced by the “critical culture” borders on paradox and we cannot avoid the feeling that he consciously defies our common sense, by claiming a positive role to horrific social phenomena and to cynical political maneuverings. In short – and unlike Lovinescu, in whose case this apologetic dimension stands somehow in the back-stage – Zeletin writes as an “integral” defender of the Romanian economic, social and political elite.

This characterization of Zeletin as a resolute defender of the *status quo* can only be reinforced if we take into account the genesis of his system of thought. As

⁴⁶ Love, *Crafting the Third World*, p. 47.

we reconstructed it with another occasion,⁴⁷ Zeletin's intellectual evolution looks very surprising. Indeed, if in *The Romanian Bourgeoisie* and *Neoliberalism* Zeletin speaks as both an apologist of the liberal elite and as a devout westernizer, it appears that, in previous pieces with a social and political content, he had argued as a kind of traditionalist and – still more significantly – as a bitter critique of the same political elite. It seems that, until the very last moment before launching the series of works in which he formulated a sophisticated defense of the strategy of westernization followed by the Liberals, Zeletin had been nothing else but one of the host of anti-liberal social critics. At some point in his intellectual evolution, he started to build an impressive rationalization for everything that he had beforehand used to blame as historical monstrosities. This fact can only shed a revealing light on the true character of his apology of the Romanian oligarchy.

As the ideas of the “first Zeletin” had derived from his adoption of the social diagnostic of “forms without substance”, so the system of ideas that Zeletin developed when embracing the opposite stance is based on his rejection of the very same social diagnostic. As he now argues, the description of Romanian society in such terms comes from the fact that the social analysts of all persuasions do not understand where to look in order to discover the social-economic base that corresponds to the institutional imports taken from the West. They rightly argue that a genuine parliamentary state with a large bureaucratic apparatus can only be based on an authentic bourgeois, capitalist society. Comparing local

⁴⁷ Victor Rizescu, “Un critic al Partidului Liberal: primul Ștefan Zeletin”, in *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, ed. a II-a, București, Pro Universitaria, 2020, pp. 33-100.

realities with those prevalent in the West, they conclude that such social-economic preconditions for organic development are not met in Romania: hence, their characterization of Romanian society as a distortion of the western one. The error of this social diagnostic can be easily disclosed, however, if we understand that the social and economic realities of a backward country like Romania have to be compared not with those of the contemporary West, but with those prevalent in the West centuries before. Romanian capitalism appears as a sham only if it is measured by the criteria of XIXth century western economic life. It compares well, however, with the economic arrangements of the western European countries in the age of mercantilism, that is, in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. The political structure of a parliamentary liberal state has not been erected, in Romania, on the shallow basis of an agrarian, feudal economy, but on the firm foundation of a capitalist economy that is passing through its first stages of evolution. And the modifications that the XIXth century political structure imported from the West suffered in Romania are themselves not arbitrary distortions, but the result of a necessary effort – and of a spontaneous social reflex – to adapt the state forms to the economic base.

Zeletin offers justifications, thus, for both the social-economic and the political deplorable aspects of the Romanian life, which were condemned by the social critics of the previous decades. They all appear as XIXth century approximations of older phenomena recorded by western history. Romania has not followed an “abnormal” or “monstrous” path of development, he argues, but only repeated, at a latter time and in different circumstances, the stages of development previously followed by the West. He makes this claim not only by reference to Romania, but also with respect to the category of the “backward” countries generally. He explicitly takes issue

with the idea – clearly formulated in Romania by the socialist Dobrogeanu-Gherea⁴⁸ but implicitly accepted by virtually the entire “critical culture” – that retarded countries are bound to follow a trajectory of social evolution of their own. There is only one single succession of developmental stages that a society might take along its progression from the traditional to the modern world. If a major difference exists between early and late developing countries, it consists in the fact that latecomers to modernization advance on the course of evolution at a much accelerated pace, occasionally skipping some of its stations. This intellectual artifice enables Zeletin not only to retrospectively justify the authoritarian politics, interventionist economy and social misery of the previous age, but also to offer prospective rationalizations for an even tighter economic interventionism and a still more authoritarian political system – ingeniously designated as “neoliberalism” –, that Romania, this time together with the West, is expected to experience in the nearest future.

7

As the various arguments developed by the critical culture can be traced back to the overarching idea of “forms without substance”, so the pro-establishment arguments of Lovinescu and Zeletin can be described as deriving from the effort to reject this general idea. The intellectual strategies they employed in order to

⁴⁸ See especially Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Post-scriptum sau cuvinte uitate” [1908], in *Opere complete*, ed de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol 3, 1977, pp. 476-504. See also Henri H. Stahl, “Théories de C. Dobrogeanu Gherea sur les lois de la pénétration du capitalisme dans les ‘pays retardaires’”, *Review: a Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations* 2: 1, 1978, pp. 101-114.

accomplish this task were very different, however. In the account of Zeletin, the error of the critical culture lays at the deep level of the very description of the process of modernization. The social critics of all persuasions are wrong in not being able to distinguish the “substance” – that is, the capitalist economy of a commercial, mercantilist type – that stood as the counterpart of institutional innovation, although it is conspicuously displayed in open light. In the account of Lovinescu, on the other hand, the critical culture is right on its descriptive side, and only fails when moving to prescriptions. The failure of the social critics comes from their refusal to accept the inevitability of the evils they scorn. In other words, Lovinescu accepts the diagnostic of “forms without substance” as valid, at the same time arguing that, in countries like Romania, it could have not happened otherwise, and everything is to the better. The imitation of the West is the fate of all latecomers to modernization, and such imitation can only be done by first adopting the western-type political, institutional and ideological “superstructure”, in the absence of corresponding social and economic foundations. Modernization necessarily proceeds, here, “from upside down” and it has to be implemented in the field of institutions before taking roots at the deep levels of society. Certain distortions result as unavoidably from this reversal of the developmental stages. Over the long run, however, all these unintended consequences of the process of modernization-through-imitation would disappear, both the social base and the political superstructure coming to approximate those of the western countries. Thus, while for Zeletin there is no such thing as a special path of development for a backward country, Lovinescu holds that Romanian development is indeed different from that of the West, but nevertheless natural for any country outside the confines

of the West. Both arguments, however, amount to presenting the social phenomena denounced as abnormal by the critical culture as necessary evils that arise on the path of westernization and to understand westernization itself as desirable, in the long run benefic, and ultimately both unavoidable and irreversible.

No predecessor of Zeletin has been identified to the present. Otherwise, the argument that Lovinescu employed when joining Zeletin's struggle against the "reactionary forces" did have an easily detectable pedigree. It is most probable that the author who can be credited to have been the first that responded to Maiorescu's denunciation of the disjunction between forms and substance with the argument that (legal and institutional) forms could be expected to generate, in the predictable future, the corresponding (cultural, social and economic) substance, was the philosopher and historian A. D. Xenopol. His reaction against the *Junimist* modernizing skepticism was as rapid as it could have been. Already in 1868, immediately after reading, when studying in Germany – with a scholarship paid by the *Junimea* cultural society –, Maiorescu's "Against the Present Direction of Romanian Culture", he sent a letter to Iacob Negruzzi – one of the founders of the *Junimea* society and for many years director of its journal, *Literary Conversations* –, in which he warned against the mood of general skepticism that Maiorescu's rhetoric was likely to bring forth.⁴⁹

Xenopol broadened his arguments, meant to dispel the feeling of pessimism regarding Romania's prospects of modernization that irresistibly irradiated from *Junimist* criticism – and also to counteract the reactionary

⁴⁹ A. D. Xenopol, "Scrisoare către Iacob Negruzzi" [1868], in *Scieri social-filozofice*, ed de N. Gogoneață și Z. Ornea, București, Editura Științifică, 1967, pp. 146-155.

implications that could have been drawn from Maiorescu's otherwise very moderate conservative rhetoric –, in a series of articles published in 1870-1877, under the general title “Studies on Our Present Condition”. Granting that institutional imports could be damaging, indeed, if unfitted to the general social structure, he underlined the fact that there was no reason whatsoever to question the applicability in the Romanian setting of the most general principles of legislation and institutional organization brought into being by western modernity. The only legitimate concern, he said, was to carefully adjust those principles and institutional devices to the specific configuration of the society that adopted them, or in other words to take account of the difference between their basic structure – with universal relevance – and the peculiar forms they had taken in their place of origin. When contemplating the splendid functioning of the major principles of governance in the advanced countries of Europe we have to distinguish, thus, between their inner “core” and their outward “cover”, to reject the second and to adopt the first, and to enmesh this last one into a new cover, fit for the new realities that the same principles are now expected to address.⁵⁰

The same author takes several steps further in approximating the general position that most easily comes to mind when the name of Lovinescu is invoked several years later, in his works with an economic content. Joining the growing opposition – inaugurated by the economists Dionisie Pop-Marțian and Petre S. Aurelian – against the free-trade ideas that had been dominating in the country up to that time, Xenopol

⁵⁰ Idem, “Despre reforma așezămintelor noastre” [1874], in Eugen Lovinescu, coord., *Antologia ideologiei junimiste*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1942, pp. 165-278.

develops his arguments – to the extent that state intervention is required for the Romanian infant industry to take off – into a more general statement related to the precedence that political artifice unavoidably has, in a backward country, on spontaneous social and economic processes.⁵¹

Another author who (implicitly) contributed to the unfolding of the argument that imported forms can generate their corresponding substance was the literary historian Pompiliu Eliade. In a doctoral dissertation published at Paris in 1898 and dealing with the impact of French ideas in the Romanian principalities, at the end of the XVIIIth century and the beginning of the XIXth, this enthusiastic supporter of acculturation went as far as to say that, when looking at the influence that the western country had been exerting on the eastern one, what one could see was not the image of a backward people in the process of being regenerated, through the contact with a more developed civilization: in fact, French influence meant the very birth of the Romanian people, for the first time molded and disentangled at that juncture from the amorphous barbarity of the late Turkish domination.⁵²

In Lovinescu's *History of Modern Romanian Civilization*, the argument that imitative modernization is natural and legitimate is split up into several theoretical statements that all lead to the same conclusion. According to the author's own understanding, they should be seen as historical "laws" with universal

⁵¹ Idem, "Comerțul exterior al României" [1881], quoted in John Michael Montias, "Notes on the Romanian Debate on Sheltered Industrialization", in Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania*, p. 60. See also Love, *Crafting the Third World*, pp. 71-74; A. D. Xenopol, *Opere economice*, ed. de Ion Veverca, București, Editura Științifică, 1967.

⁵² Pompiliu Eliade, *Înfluența franceză asupra spiritului public în România*, ed. și trad. de Aurelia Dumitrașcu, București, Humanitas, 2000 [1898].

relevance. The relationship between these laws and the historical narrative of the creation of modern Romania is twofold. On the one hand, they are heuristic instruments with an explanative function: the story of Romanian's encounter with western modernity becomes intelligible, so Lovinescu thinks, only if approached from the standpoint of these sociological generalizations. On the other hand, the record of Romanian history is itself scrutinized in order to compile empirical evidence supporting the same generalizations. The theoretical statements are established through the parallel analysis of, and the continuous comparison between, two series of historical developments: first, the process of Romanian modernization, studied in detail; and second, a kaleidoscopic collection of facts and phenomena, picked up – quite randomly, one might add – from across the entire span of European and world history. While Lovinescu moves back and forth between these two areas of study throughout the entire work, the explorations into the Romanian case are concentrated in the first volume – *The Revolutionary Forces* – and the considerations of a more general character are largely placed in the third one – *The Laws of the Formation of Romanian Civilization*.

Although Lovinescu never makes an inventory of his laws, we can easily identify four such general statements, which can be ordered in a somewhat logical sequence and according to their level of generality. The first of them concerns the principle of “synchronism”, or “imitation”, or else “interdependency”. It says that nations and civilizations naturally interact with each other, most often the less developed of them imitating the one placed on a higher level on the developmental scale. This fact should not be seen as an evil, Lovinescu thinks, but simply as the only available means for the improvement of societies. The second historical law says that, when it take place, imitation will proceed from upside down, starting with

the institutional forms and not with the social substance. The third statement is related to the opposition between revolutionary and evolutionary change. It says that, far from being inescapably calamitous events, revolutionary episodes are natural occurrences in the history of virtually all societies. Gradual transformations are not always possible, and sometimes a violent break with the past – of which the sudden and enthusiastic imitation of another civilization can be an example – is beneficial. Finally, the last theoretical statement says that ideological transfers from one society to another take precedence, as a general rule, on economic influences and have to be seen, accordingly, as the first and most important of the mechanisms by which the synchronization of societies is accomplished.

As reconstructed in the framework of these laws, the history of the creation of modern Romania emerges as pervaded by rationality. The social and political arrangements of past and present Romania are legitimated as embodying this rationality of the historical process and the National Liberal Party – the leading “revolutionary force” – is consecrated as the arm of historical destiny. Lovinescu also employs his set of historical laws as a polemical device. In the second volume of the book – *The Reactionary Forces* – and occasionally in other parts of it the criticisms adduced against the modernizing elite of the liberals by the four ideological currents of *Junimism*, nationalism, socialism and populism are taken one by one and evaluated – and their claims of scientific social criticism are rejected – in light of Lovinescu’s own conception of historical evolution. Responding to the anti-establishment and “traditionalist” (or socialist) political writers from a pro-liberal standpoint, Lovinescu also sets himself against the author who preceded him in offering a rationalization of the liberal-sponsored modernization and a systematic rejection of the

anti-liberal arguments. The materialistic determinism of Zeletin is condemned, not in the name of voluntarist principles or of “methodological individualism”, but in order to be replaced by a “softer” determinism of an “idealist” sort.

Unlike Zeletin, Lovinescu never argues that the liberal-democratic order has run its course and has to be replaced by a new political system. Still, his theoretical allegiance to the foundational principles of liberal democracy never turns into a significant pleading for their more effective institutionalization in the Romanian environment. Following Zeletin in this respect, Lovinescu accepts the “oligarchic” politics of the Liberals as a fact to be taken for granted,⁵³ never taking pains to openly criticize its most deplorable features. To the extent that they can be detected at all in his writings, Lovinescu’s hopes for a broadening of the political system and a restructuring of the social arrangements are placed in a hardly foreseeable future, and never give rise to any open disagreements with the establishment of the day. As Zeletin’s oligarchic apologetics, Lovinescu’s strategy of concealing his general political views for the sake of defending the Romanian political elite emerges more clearly when he is compared with some of his contemporary fellow-travelers of the anti-traditionalist camp.

8

According to what was established above, as far as their sociological conceptions – related to the desirability of western-type modernization – are concerned, the classical modernists have most often been granted unqualified good assessments in the scholarship of the field. The corresponding assessment of their political stance has generally led, however, to two different and opposite opinions. Indeed, in so far as it addresses the problem of

⁵³ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol. 2: *Forțele reacționare*, pp. 31-32.

the political views that went together with the various conceptions about social modernization and national development voiced in pre-communist Romania, the prevailing scholarship has reached one of the following conclusions: it has either assimilated the modernist stance with a liberal-democratic attitude – due to the fact that the classical modernists spoke as defenders of the National Liberal Party, as well as due to the common, and to a large extent misleading, identification of the westernizers of non-western societies with the generic liberalism born in the West;⁵⁴ or, taking account of the avowed argumentation in favor of interventionist and collectivist practices given by these authors, or else of the frailty of their liberal-democratic advocacy, it concluded that no intellectual trend resonating with the major concerns of post-communist democratization can be found in the pre-communist cultural heritage of the country.⁵⁵

Taking advantage of the identification of a formerly neglected intellectual attitude, we can take a departure from these trends of scholarship. As we already pointed out above, we think that the pre-communist political authors who conjoined a modernist stance – in much the same way as Lovinescu and Zeletin – with an adverse stance towards the National Liberal Party “oligarchy” – in much the same way as the “critical culture” scorned by both Zeletin and Lovinescu, and sometimes coming in its footsteps – were driven by this fundamental intellectual choice much closer than the “official” modernists to a significant pleading for liberal-democratic values.

⁵⁴ Cases in point are Ornea, *Anii treizeci*; Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat*; Nemoianu, *România și liberalismele ei*.

⁵⁵ This appears to be the view prevalent in such works as Daniel Barbu, *Politica pentru barbari*, București, Nemira, 2005; Adrian-Paul Iliescu, *Anatomia răului politic*, București, Ideea Europeană, 2006 [2005].

In another article we considered at great length the figure of maybe the most interesting of these political authors.⁵⁶ The stream of articles published, over four decades, by the intriguing journalist, literary critic and former socialist militant H. Sanielevici display precisely that combination of vocal disagreement with the anti-modern culture whose efficient rejection was mainly responsible for the glory acquired by Lovinescu and Zeletin, with a no less resolute and open rejection – advocated by plain references to the *Junimist* tradition of social thought – of the prevailing oligarchic politics and interventionist economy. In the end, his social analyses even enable Sanielevici to point precisely to the same liberal establishment as to the main source of cultural obscurantism and ideological reaction. While not as ingenious a social thinker as Zeletin and neither such a powerful commentator of cultural phenomena and intellectual trends like Lovinescu, Sanielevici emerges, at a closer scrutiny, as a valuable representative of the critical culture's sociology, and as a political thinker that exemplifies much better than either of the two an engagement with the extension of liberal and democratic values.

In fact, the intellectual trend opposed to interventionist economy, occasionally broadened towards the stance of political liberalism, was not as feeble in pre-communist Romania as both a historiography indebted to the ideas of economic nationalism and protectionism and the power of the “Zeletinist” tradition⁵⁷ made us to think.

⁵⁶ Victor Rizescu, “Înțelepciunea nebunului sau gândirea politică a lui Henric Sanielevici”, in *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, ed. a II-a, București, Pro Universitaria, 2020, pp. 101-174.

⁵⁷ Most relevant titles: Costin Murgescu, *Mersul ideilor economice la români*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, vols. 1-2, 1987-1990; Ioan Saizu, *Modernizarea României contemporane. Perioada interbelică. Pas și impas*, București, Editura Academiei, 1991; Radu-Dan Vlad, *Gândirea economică românească despre industrializare, 1859-1900*, București, Mica Valahie, 2001.

Authors like Eugen Demetrescu,⁵⁸ George Strat,⁵⁹ Gheorghe Tașcă⁶⁰ or Anastasie Gusti⁶¹ are good cases in point, while the inexplicably forgotten Ștefan Antim came closest to Sanielevici by the means of offering an original interpretation of the sociology of “forms” and “substance”, with the task of explaining the nature of the Romanian ruling oligarchy.⁶² Other examples could follow.⁶³

This liberal – and avowedly anti-National Liberal Party – tradition of thinking will not constitute the object of concern over the remaining of this article. Instead, we shall focus on an intellectual figure which, set in the same comparative perspective with Lovinescu and Zeletin, appears as a better example of open involvement with the ideals of social justice and democratic political participation. This comparison will also enable us to take a look at a topic that has featured heavily in recent Romanian cultural debates: namely, the demand to go back to the political wisdom of the “1848 generation”, eventually making use of the works of the inter-war modernists as of a way of access to this pre-*Junimist* period in the evolution of Romanian culture.

⁵⁸ Eugen Demetrescu, *Liberalismul economic în evoluția României moderne*, București, n. p., 1940.

⁵⁹ George Strat, *Elogiul libertății*, București, Tipografia de Artă Leopold Geller, 1937.

⁶⁰ Gheorghe Tașcă, *Liberalism, corporatism, intervenționism*, București, n. p., 1938.

⁶¹ Anastasie Gusti, *Scrieri sociale, politice și economice*, ed. de George Strat, București, Editura Librăriei Universitare I. Cărbăș, 1940.

⁶² Ștefan Antim, *Chestiunea socială în România*, București, Imprimeria “La Roumanie”, 1908; Idem, *Chestia evreiască. Studiu Social*, București, “Librăria Nouă” Carol P. Segal, 1918; Idem, *Chestia țărănească. Studiu Social*, Craiova, Institutul de Editură “Samintca”, 1919; Idem, *Studii și portrete*, Craiova, Ramuri, [1936]; Idem, *Alte studii și portrete*, București, Adevărul S. A., [1937].

⁶³ See the collection of the journal *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală* (București, 1933-1940), with George Strat as a chief-editor.

Indeed, there has been a widespread tendency in Romanian scholarship to depict interwar modernism as a resuscitation of the modernizing optimism characteristic of the 1848 period, after several decades of growing modernizing skepticism.⁶⁴ As embodied in the works of Lovinescu and Zeletin, this XXth century mode of thinking is considered to exemplify a kind of intellectual attitude that incorporates that “openness” towards things modern and foreign characteristic of the pre-*Junimist* era, while avoiding – due to the lessons of *Junimist* criticism – both patriotic exaggerations and political naiveté. Besides, Lovinescu and his disciples are indicated as the legitimate heirs of both “fortyeightism” (in the political field) and *Junimism* (in the artistic field): taking from the later the doctrine of the “autonomy of art”, they dissociated it from any conservative ideological leanings and infused it with the political values of liberalism and democracy.⁶⁵ Zeletin, on the other hand, appears as the thinker who placed the modernist attitude of the fortyeighters on firmer intellectual foundations, by adding to it the dimension of social and economic analysis.

While it is true that, in Zeletin and Lovinescu, modernizing optimism was only the reverse side of their attempt to offer final and systematic refutations of the various expressions of post-1848 skepticism – of *Junimist* progeny – regarding westernization, we shall argue that

⁶⁴ Cases in point are, once again, works such as Marino, *Pentru Europa*; Idem, *Politică și cultură*; Nemoianu, *România și liberalismele ei*. See also Adrian Marino în dialog cu Sorin Antohi, *Al treilea discurs: cultură, ideologie și politică în România*, Iași, Polirom, 2001.

⁶⁵ Virgil Nemoianu, “Variable Socio-Political Functions of Aesthetic Doctrines. Lovinescu vs. Western Aestheticism”, in Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania*, pp. 174-207. The most consistent *Junimist* defense of the autonomy of art is P. P. Negulescu, *Polemice*, ed. de Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1992 [1895].

this mode of thinking in favor of the adoption of the western model has to be seen as a new departure in the intellectual history of Romania, rather than as a reinforcement of the 1848 tradition. This should not be taken to mean, however, that the latter tradition was extinct in the first half of the XXth century. On the contrary, we aim to disclose an intellectual attitude that can legitimately be characterized as a continuation of it.

As a matter of fact, this second formulation of the pro-western case is present, to some extent, in the very body of Lovinescu's *History of Modern Romanian Civilization*. This book, that has generally been taken as offering a unitary and firmly consistent line of reasoning, is actually build around two different – and indeed heterogeneous – kinds of argumentation. Lovinescu's main discourse, presented in brief above, is accompanied by an underlying discourse, whose normative conclusions – the desirable character of westernization – are similar, but whose basic principles and intellectual premises are different.

According to the first discourse, the Romanians are likely to succeed in integrating themselves into the western-type civilization because all civilizations necessarily interact with each other, being continuously molded by external influences. In other words, westernization is legitimate because there are no such things as immutable national essences, mutually irreconcilable to each other, that cannot be fused together into a functional synthesis. According to the second discourse, the Romanians are likely to adopt western civilization successfully precisely because they are western by their innate essence. The Latin component of their national identity – that Lovinescu, in a confusing manner very characteristic to the times, often refers to as

constituting their “racial characteristics”⁶⁶ – is the defining such building block of “Romanianness”. Although defined by reference to cultural facts, and not to ethnic or racial ones, Latinity is presented thus by Lovinescu much rather as an unchanging essence than as a cultural texture likely to be remolded by historical processes of acculturation. And it is precisely their defining Latin character that somehow predetermines the Romanians for an unproblematic westernization, had the “reactionary forces” not been unfortunately present such as to hinder the otherwise inescapable process of historical change. Joining the western civilization, Romanians are actually returning to where they rightly belong, after a long historical period when nefarious – and contingent – non-western influences prevented them from developing their latent potentialities.⁶⁷

The discovery of the West was thus, for the Romanians, the rediscovery of their occidental brethren. This way of looking at occidentalization was certainly not peculiar to Lovinescu. It was only a common view that rested – in the words of a foreign observer of Romania – on the idea that “Romanian society is essentially a part of western society and [...] is moving along with it. This has been the position of those that have stressed Romania’s Latinity and French connections, who like to regard Bucharest as the little Paris of the Balkans and Romanian civilization as the outpost of western culture against a Slavic and Barbaric East”.⁶⁸ At the time Lovinescu was writing, the general “autochtonist” twist of Romanian nationalism – taking place around 1900 – had already transformed such a view into a minority one. Several decades beforehand, however, this vision had been dominant in Romanian culture. Before the

⁶⁶ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol.1: *Forțele revoluționare*, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 10, 36.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 339-340.

Junimists identified westernization as an intellectual challenge – and before Xenopol, Lovinescu or Zeletin set out to offer their elaborate responses to the *Junimist* objections against rapid westernization – a form of spontaneous – and, by comparison to the later forms, mentioned above, naïve – kind of westernizer stance had been characteristic to the Romanian educated strata. Before Maiorescu and his colleagues raised the question of westernization in terms of the dichotomy between “forms” and “substance”, the generation of the fortyeighters had anticipated an answer to the puzzle of modernization thus formulated. This first Romanian westernizer discourse was nothing else than the emerging nationalist ideology itself. The nationalist thinking of the first half of the XIXth century rested on the view that the inner substance of the Romanian national identity was itself of a western kind and thus it was prone to rapidly integrate into the expanding European civilization. The discovery of the West was nothing else, according to this view, than a rediscovery of the national essence.⁶⁹

Moreover, far from being specific to the Romanians, this articulation of ardent nationalism and acceptance of western influences was actually a feature of virtually all the East European national ideologies, in the first part of the XIXth century. Throughout the region, the shaping of national identities and the rise of nationalist ideologies went hand in hand with admiration for the West and with the eagerness to emulate it.⁷⁰ Comparison to the West,

⁶⁹ John C. Campbell, *French Influence and the Rise of Roumanian Nationalism: the Generation of 1848*, New York, Arno Press, 1971 [1940]; Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatura între 1780-1840*, București, Cartea Românească, 2008, [1972].

⁷⁰ Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740-1985: Feudalism to Communism*, sec. ed., London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, pp. 59-83; Maciej Janowski, “Three Historians”, *CEU History Department*

with the accompanying embarrassment, was everywhere – and somewhat paradoxically – a component of the new patriotic pride and the inflation of this national pride was the reverse side of the drive to westernization. The (real or imagined) virtues of western civilization were taken as the privileged reference for any attempt at understanding and any effort of further elaborating the national character. The same was true for the historical explorations – accompanied by a great amount of historical myth-making – into the national past of each of the peoples in the region. This past – together with the supposed national *psyche* that had evolved from it – was scrutinized in the attempt at identifying, beyond the recent centuries of degradation and beyond the present condition of misery, those historical episodes and traits of character which could certify that the people in question had sometime been – and in spite of the appearances still was – the repository of the same kind of virtues as those exhibited by the great peoples of the West. Recipes of national regeneration were formulated accordingly, by the means of which those virtues were to be re-enacted.

The Latin component of the Romanian identity was a privileged such certificate of noblesse. While not employing the very terms of “form” and “substance” explicitly, the authors of the first half of the XIXth century implicitly argued that the substance of the Romanian nation, as Latin, was of the same essence as the forms of western civilization, and as such the discovery of the West by the Romanians was only a rediscovery of their inner self, for centuries hidden to themselves and to others by the “forms” of an alien, Byzantine-Slavic-Oriental civilization. By imitating

Yearbook 2001-2002, pp. 199-232; Diana Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism”, in Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity*, pp. 399-456.

“Europe”, the Romanians were not doing anything else than to let free their own identity from the chains of accidental historical influences. The Latinist ideology of the period was thus only the Romanian form of the incipient westernizer discourse characteristic to the entire area. While their neighbors had to search for such proofs of compatibility with the West in the heroic record of national history, the Romanians – although doing the same thing no less extensively – could invoke their very national “essence” as the supreme argument.

This type of nationalist discourse and the form of historical consciousness that went together with it entered into decline after the 1860’s, under the attack of *Junimism*.⁷¹ Later on, after 1900, the pro-western nationalism was gradually replaced by a new variety of nationalist discourse, that of autochtonism.⁷² The new brand of nationalism was not arguing any more that the Romanians were worthy of being rescued by the West from among their Slavic and Oriental neighbors. On the contrary, it argued that they stood, either by themselves alone or together with the other Orthodox peoples, as a self-contained civilization, whose values could not and had not be compared with the western ones, and certainly were not hierarchically inferior to them. However, after 1900, the old, pro-western nationalism still glimmers in the works of several authors. Driven away from the field of historical studies and philology – that had constituted its former privileged preserve – by the *Junimists* and the new nationalist thinkers, it

⁷¹ For the attack of *Junimea* against the Latinist ideas see Titu Maiorescu, “Contra școalei Bărnuțiu” [1868], in *Critice*, ed. de Domnica Filimon, București, Elion, 2000 [1908] pp. 387-428; George Panu, “Studiul istoriei la români” [1874], in Eugen Lovinescu, ed., *Antologia ideologiei junimiste*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1942, pp. 283-322.

⁷² Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*.

resurfaces, under the guise of another discipline – social psychology – in the book *On the Psychology of the Romanian People*, published in 1907 by the sociologist Dumitru Drăghicescu.⁷³

The best brief characterization of Drăghicescu's thinking on the relationship between Romania and the West is that of a sample of pre-*Junimist* nationalist discourse that has survived the attacks of *Junimist* criticism. Overall, the characterization of “a fortyeighter in the XXth century” best suits Drăghicescu, of all the interwar modernist writers, precisely because, unlike the other authors of the period who looked at the design of westernization with optimism, he is not much concerned to set himself against the tradition inaugurated by Maiorescu. Most of the time, Drăghicescu seems to ignore the “critical culture”, although he appears to have been entirely conscious of it.⁷⁴ In particular, Drăghicescu's understanding of the issue of national identity, as it relates to the challenge of modernization, is a reinforcement of the dominating nationalist discourse of the 1848 period. It is an expression of the belief that westernization should not be seen as a major problem, precisely because, far from running counter to the deep characteristics of Romanian society, it resonates with its inner life and its defining traits.

As a work which sets the task of identifying the national psychology of the Romanians, *On the Psychology of the Romanian People* seems to belong together with the long series of attempts at formulating a metaphysics of the Romanian nation in an indigenist guise that the

⁷³ D. Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului român*, ed. de Elisabeta Simion, București, Albatros, 1995 [1907].

⁷⁴ As testified by Idem, *Titu Maiorescu. Schiță de biografie psihosociologică*, București, n. p., [1940].

Romanian culture has produced.⁷⁵ Its general orientation is, however, strikingly different. Drăghicescu's approach to the subject as a social psychologist involves a great deal of historical considerations, distilled from the works of the classical Romanian historians A. D. Xenopol, Nicolae Iorga, Ioan Bogdan and D. Onciul. In an age of scientism, Drăghicescu likes to compare his investigations on the characteristics of a nation to those of a chemist on the structure of a substance. Like the latter one, he has to separate the basic and indivisible elements that had entered into the composition of the national substance. These ones are the defining traits of the various national groups fused, along history, into the Romanian synthesis, or else influencing it from outside. Further, he has to establish the external conditions under which the "chemical" reactions of national fusion took place – that is, to trace the influences of the historical environment on the process of national elaboration, during its successive stages. Present collective Romanian psychology will become intelligible on this basis as a combination of primary elements under specific economic, social and political conditions.

The national substance has a hard core and several secondary additions. The original nucleus of the Romanian mind is composed of two components: the Dacian and the Latin, with the predominance of the latter. All further additions in fact corrupted this original synthesis. The predatory barbarians, the Slavs – whose imprint on the Romanian mind is acknowledged as most profound of all –, the Turks, the Phanariot Greeks and even the Russians during their protectorate over the Romanian principalities at the beginning of the XIXth century exerted on the

⁷⁵ Sorin Antohi, "Romania and the Balkans: from Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology", *Tr@nsit-Virtuelles Forum* 21, 2002, pp. 1-31.

Romanians influences that went against their original frame of mind. And due to an unlucky history the Romanians were an easy pray for all such nefarious contaminations. While naturally inclined, by virtue of their Latin ancestry, towards the West, they were gradually dragged to the East by the successive waves of invaders, intruders and imperial rulers. When they were on the edge of having their (basically western) identity fully dissolved in the Levantine melting pot, the West unexpectedly intervened and put an end to this (seemingly unending) process of decay. Under the influence of the West, that most conspicuously manifested itself as a French influence, national regeneration started, and it is still underway in Drăghicescu's time. Romanian psychology still bears the scars of the unhappy past and it is not even by far clearly configured. Several decades of western influence stopped the degradation of the national substance but could not yet decide its future path of evolution.

Which way will it evolve? At a time when the main nationalist leaders had already engaged on the campaign for making the Romanians truer to their own nature, irreducible to any set of values valid for all mankind, Drăghicescu still thinks that only by looking at the achievements of the great nations of the West one can learn the principles of a fertile national pedagogy. Even among these ones, only few have acquired a clear-cut collective psychological profile. And of these, only one can actually be taken as a model. There is nothing comparable, for Drăghicescu, with the harmonious national features of the French, except, perhaps, those of the ancient Romans. The old Latinism is replaced, in Drăghicescu's work, with a no less enthusiastic Francophilia somewhat incongruent with the dominant pro-German cultural orientation of the period.

At the time he published this book Dumitru Drăghicescu was already – and unlike Lovinescu and

Zeletin – a member of the National Liberal Party and he was to remain a lifelong admirer and fellow-traveler of it. Moreover, after arguing his pro-western case in 1907, Drăghicescu was to come back for a while in the stream of public debate, this time with writings that contain his pro-liberal case. However, Drăghicescu's National Liberal Party apologetics – contained in the two volumes *The Evolution of Liberal Ideas* (1921) and *Political Parties and Social Classes* (1922)⁷⁶ – is of a very different nature than the one offered by Lovinescu and Zeletin. Indeed, as his westernizer rhetoric is echoing the national discourse of the fortyeighters, so his political stance is strikingly reminiscent of their corresponding ideas. The political conceptions of Drăghicescu display the same combination of democratic radicalism, confused liberalism, utopian socialism and vague humanitarianism characteristic of the 1848 period.⁷⁷ As such, they have very little in common with the actual policies of the Romanian Liberals. Drăghicescu celebrates the National Liberal Party as the artisan of modern Romania and as the inspirer of all generous political projects, culminating with the introduction of universal suffrage and the agrarian reform. Nevertheless, he presents a glorious brief history of the party only to remind his readers that “after the death of the enthusiastic liberals of 1848, [...]

⁷⁶ D. Drăghicescu, *Evoluția ideilor liberale*, București, Imprimeriile “Independența”, 1921; Idem, *Partide politice și clase sociale*, București, n. p., 1922.

⁷⁷ I. Cojocaru, Z. Ornea, *Falansterul de la Scăieni*, București, Editura Politică, 1966; G. Zane, “Saint-simonism și fourierism în România” [1970], in *Studii*, ed. de Elena G. Zane, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980, pp. 61-81. The same historical realities came later to be presented by inverting the evaluation marks: see, for example, Dan Dionisie, “Socialism, liberalism, utopie, milenarism. O incursiune în ideologia revoluției de la 1848 din Țara Românească”, *Polis. Revistă de științe politice* 5: 1, 1998, pp. 142-158.

the leaders of the Liberal Party” have generally been “lacking of the sacred flame of generous liberal ideals”. By contrast to the great ancestors, “they were moderate persons, essentially bourgeois, for whom the conservative opposition and the resistance met from above [that is, from the part of the Crown] were “reasons enough to determine them not to tackle, for a long period, the problem of land distribution”.⁷⁸ What is true about the persistent reluctance of the liberals to tackle the intricate agrarian issue also holds true with respect to many other aspects of their policies. Accordingly, the party has to be rejuvenated by a re-infusion with the half-forgotten political temper of the 1848 generation: “It is obvious that the Liberal Party needs now an ideal akin, indeed similar to that prevailing in 1848. If we want this party to have a future and to score achievements of the same rank as it did in the past, we must find a new political creed, an ideal suited to our age and aspirations, in the same way as the idea of liberty responded to the expectations of the oppressed masses in 1848”.⁷⁹

The new political creed that Drăghicescu offers to the liberal leaders as constituting both the key to future success and the link to the glorious predecessors is based on a very broad idea of social justice. According to Drăghicescu, “in relation to the no less fundamental principle of liberty, [...] the principle of social justice appears as a logical corrective”.⁸⁰ As such, it should not be seen as merely a second-ranking element of liberal democracy, but as one of its central pillars. This is so because “social justice or equity is virtually identical with democracy. [...] Saying that mankind evolves towards democratization and saying that it evolves towards the

⁷⁸ Drăghicescu, *Evoluția ideilor liberale*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁰ Idem, *Partide politice și clase sociale*, p. 11.

fulfillment of the principle of social justice is to say one and the same thing in two different ways”.⁸¹ All efforts must be made, Drăghicescu maintains, for expanding the welfare policies and for associating the workers unions in the affairs of government. In order to face these new tasks, the ideological outlook of the National Liberal Party has to be dramatically updated: “What brought forth the glory and the power of the liberals in the past was the fact that they were a vanguard party; and the party will not succeed in preserving the same leading position if it turns into a rearguard one”.⁸² In more precise terms, the “Liberal Party cannot afford to remain simply liberal. The notion of liberty has to be adjusted to the notion of justice. [...] The bourgeois regime is everywhere being transformed into a democratic-social regime. The future belongs neither to bourgeois liberalism, nor to the social-democratic utopia, but to a kind of social liberalism, within which the bourgeoisie will get associated with the industrial proletariat, in order to take hold of both the political and the economic leadership in the state. [...] In accordance with an inexorable social evolution, the Liberal Party has to get transformed into a practical socialist party, that is, a liberal-socialist one, something of the kind of radical or radical-socialist or social-reformist parties in the West nowadays”.⁸³

The last sentences sound somewhat confusing. As Sanielevici’s literary tastes, Drăghicescu’s political constructs do no stand the test of time – and were certainly not the most brilliant even by the standards of his own time and place. And as the former one’s enthusiastic pleading for free-trade economics must be evaluated against the circumstances of the time, so the

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

latter's bizarre proposals for social reform and democratization⁸⁴ must be assessed by reference to the general ideological confusion of the age. It may happen that neither Manchesterian economics nor welfare policies – even better conceived than in Drăghicescu's political manifestoes – were easily at the hand of Romania's interwar political establishment. Figures like Sanielevici and Drăghicescu should always remind us, however, of the need to preserve a principled allegiance to the values of individual freedom and participatory democracy even under the terrible pressures of peripheral modernization. While some of their ideas sound naïve – and certainly do so by comparison to the impressive intellectual edifices erected by the great masters of interwar modernism in defense of the rich and powerful of the day – they enable us to take an important insight into the cultural heritage of a country strained between the demands of successful integration into the global modern economy, together with its corresponding type of civilization, and the demand of complying with basic principles of political morality and public behavior. Under the guise of a vigorous and appealing optimistic belief in the chances of adopting the model proposed by western modernity, Eugen Lovinescu and Ștefan Zeletin have induced us, for a long time, into subscribing to false sociologies of modernization and to wrong assessments of the historical forces at work on the course of Romanian social transformations. Moreover, by convincing us to read Romanian cultural history through their own eyes, as it has too often been done, they prevented our

⁸⁴ See, however, for the stance of “liberal socialism” in the European thinking of the time: Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society: a Historical Argument*, University Park, Penns., The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992, pp. 152-153; Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Carlo Roselli: Socialist Heretic and Anti-fascist Exile*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999.

appropriate understanding of any ideological attitude that could not be ascribed a place on their seductive historical pictures. From behind the canvases on which Lovinescu and Zeletin painted their allegories of progress under the rule of an iron handed political elite, the “anti-oligarchic modernists” of pre-communist Romania can still convey a penetrating message that resonates with our belief that freedom and justice can be defended even against the urgency of catching up with a world historical stream which is ever deepening its terrifying speed.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ A relevant title: Theodore H. von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization: the Twentieth Century in Global Perspective*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987. For sure, the practice of underscoring in this way the difference between the West and the Rest has come to be suspected of dissimulating the cultural patterns of the imperialist historical metanarrative: see Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, New York, Scribner, 1951 [1931]; Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, Penguin Books, 2003 [1978]; Siep Stuurman, “The Canon of the History of Political Thought: Its Critique and a Proposed Alternative”, *History and Theory* 39, 1, 2000, pp. 144-166; Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012 [2006].

7. Historical Canons and Eccentric Voices: a Typological Approach to Romanian Ideological Development

The following article outlines an overall typology of ideological patterns in the modern history of Romania, by taking a critical view of mainstream interpretations, both domestic and foreign. It delineates successive departures in the evolution of liberalism, against the established conception about its linear evolution from the beginning of the XIXth century to the interwar period, also identifying intellectual stances and trends of liberal thinking previously neglected by the scholarship in the field. An inventory of left-wing ideological families is accompanied by a search for the various ideological uses Marxist theory performed in pre-communist Romania, when employed as an intellectual instrument best suited to addressing the specific challenges of the social milieu. The right-wing segment of the ideological spectrum is approached retrogressively, by starting from a clarification of the relations between the radical Right, the corporatist doctrine and the traditionalist extreme Right in the interwar period. All throughout, the effort of discovering relevant eccentricities behind canonical interpretative views is conjoined with a consistent attempt to give account of local ideological development on the basis of comparative references.

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1

The need for an all-encompassing typology of ideological trends in pre-communist Romania, taken against the background of a critical survey of existing interpretative canons, is long overdue. Only possible at the borderline between the historical and the political science perspectives, this approach could not be taken in the country under communism. Although occurrences of such discipline crossing were not uncommon over the intervening period, no attempt to get a synthetic view of the question was put forward to the present, and the various partial views advanced did not amount to drawing the contours of anything resembling a mainstream or canonical interpretation. Apart from the quite powerful influences on academic writing of some characteristic ideological tendencies connected with the critical departure from communism and its survivals in the public space – that shall be briefly touched upon below –, established views on specific segments of the field did not emerge either. Received scientific wisdom coming from older times – sometimes circulating in the guise of not fully articulated presuppositions – still needs to be taken as the baseline for any engagement with the issues involved. Alongside the relevant statements of international academia, it is such older canons that the present paper will mostly consider.

While no systematic survey of the available bibliography can be attempted within the span of a summarizing article of this kind, several clarifications regarding the general characteristics of Romanian scholarship in the field are easy to discern. The topic of the history of local political thought has never become a well-established rubric of institutionalized historical studies in Romania. The only large-scale and influential book written by a professional historian and explicitly

targeting the subject was published abroad in 1987,¹ in continuation to previous works with the same content coming from the same author.² Sustained by a hugely ambitious attempt to chart and classify the whole welter of relevant sources pertaining to the period up to 1878, it cannot be used as either a treatise or a textbook by the general reader and hardly so by the trained researcher. Moreover, it has the drawback that, while abandoning the Marxist frame – as available at the time in the country – it refrained from adopting or elaborating another set of theoretical and methodological statements recognizable as an interpretative searchlight. Another, strenuously pursued effort of the same kind which can be mentioned alongside that one was meant to obtain a history of medieval and early modern political ideas – as expressed primarily in the chronicles of the XVth-XVIIIth centuries – and it resulted in a series of comprehensive articles.³ The search for theories and methodologies within ever larger interdisciplinary horizons that followed after communism was hard to boil down to a massive pioneering work able to serve as the focus for further debates. A collective enterprise centering upon the “conceptual history” approach has to be mentioned.⁴

¹ Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești, 1369-1878*, München, Ion Dumitru Verlag, 1987.

² Idem, *Ideile politice și iluminismul în Principatele Române, 1750-1831*, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1972.

³ Eugen Stănescu, “Essai sur l'évolution de la pensée politique roumaine dans la littérature historique du Moyen Age”, *Nouvelles études d'histoire* 2, 1960, pp. 271-304; Idem, “Valoarea istorică și literară a cronicilor muntene”, in *Croniciari munteni*, ed. de Mihail Gregorian, București, Editura pentru Literatură, vol. I, 1961, pp. V-CXXVI; Idem, “Unity and Diversity in the Political Thought of the Early Romanian Society”, *Nouvelles études d'histoire* 4, 1970, pp. 91-110.

⁴ Victor Neumann, Armin Heinen, coord., *Istoria României prin concepte. Perspective alternative asupra limbajelor social-politice*, Iași, Polirom, 2010.

Historians of pre-communist times were as reluctant as their followers would be to treat the topic under a heading of its own and one can take for granted, besides, that their statements have to be seen as an integral part of the historical record studied. Precisely for this last reason, it is telling that – as shall be underscored below several times – such pronouncements made their way into later scholarship, contributing decisively to establishing the canonical interpretations. For sure, several works stand out for their effort at objectivity, against prevailing ideological biases, as also for their synthetic accomplishments. One can mention, as pathbreaking, P. P. Panaitescu's studies on selected figures of the traditional culture, partly compiled, later, in one volume,⁵ A. D. Xenopol's history of political tendencies on the road to being embodied into the mainstream political parties, in Wallachia and Moldavia, up to 1866,⁶ or I. C. Filitti's detailed history of ideological debates in the two countries, over the decade following the end of Phanariot rule.⁷ Also belonging to this company are two outstanding works originally published in the years immediately predating the installation of communism – with updated editions later on – and treating the beginnings of modern ideological development in the Principalities (by Andrei Oțetea)⁸ and,

⁵ P. P. Panaitescu, *Contribuții la istoria culturii românești*, ed. de Silvia Panaitescu și Dan Zamfirescu, București, Minerva, 1971

⁶ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice din România până la 1866*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, 2005 [1910].

⁷ I. C. Filitti, "Frământările politice și sociale în Principatele Române de la 1821 la 1828" [1932], in *Opere alese*, ed. de Georgeta Penelea, București, Editura Eminescu, 1985, pp. 61-196.

⁸ Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu și revoluția din 1821*, București, Editura Științifică, 1971 (first version in 1945).

respectively, in Transylvania (by David Prodan).⁹ Still, it could be argued that the very masterpiece of the subject has never been established as even pertaining to it: this is Gheorghe Brătianu's book about the history of Romanian estates assemblies, from the Middle Ages to 1858, meant at disclosing the precise extent taken, in local traditional society, by these medieval and early modern institutions intended to counterbalance central monarchic power.¹⁰ Written between 1947 and 1950 – as the last word of pre-communist accumulated historical wisdom, which it synthesizes –, but only published abroad in 1976, and then in the country in 1995 (accompanied by an extensive article treating the history of Transylvania with the same focus¹¹), its insights have never been harmonized with the rest of the bibliography. It is an argument of the present article that, if attempted, such a harmonization enterprise can only lead to a significant revision of the relevant historical canon.

Once taking into account the scarcity of specialized (synthetic) works coming from within the circle of historiography proper, where is one to search for disclosing the roots of the canons in the history of political thinking and ideologies? There has always been a marked tendency of mistaking the field for that of general cultural history (or, sometimes, for that of literary history). This is certainly misleading. It is also hard to trace the elements of the same canonical interpretations to the specific

⁹ David Prodan, *Suplex Libellus Valachorum. Din istoria formării națiunii române*, ed. de Mihai Alin Gherman, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1998 [1984] (first version in 1948).

¹⁰ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor în Principatele Române*, ed. de Șerban Papacostea, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1995 [1977].

¹¹ Idem, "Adunările de stări și românii în Transilvania" [1974-1975], in *Adunările de stări în Europa și în țările române în Evul Mediu*, ed. de Șerban Papacostea, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996, pp. 199-264.

insights given by specialized scholarship treating the evolution of various disciplinary compartments of the (emerging) social sciences and humanities, as that of historiography itself, but also those of literature, literary studies and philology, of social criticism and sociology, of economics, legal studies, philosophy or theology. Some such contributions to establishing the mainstream interpretations will be highlighted below, with no attempt at a systematic inventory. It is in order, otherwise, to underscore the heavy mark put on the field by two characteristic approaches. The first is that of the history of intellectuals as a social category, represented by a great array of relevant titles.¹² The second – of still greater importance – is that of the history of ideological currents taken from a (loosely defined) sociological standpoint. Although never making that standpoint fully explicit and neither marking its separation from literary history with enough determination, it is this approach that did the most in order to map the subject and to establish textbook truths about it. No matter how many other authors could be claimed as representatives of it, there are two whose impact on our received wisdom about the ideological dynamics of Romania has been felt, to the present, without ever been entirely acknowledged. One of them engaged systematically with the period stretching from the 1860's to the late 1930's, epitomizing his findings by the means of a staunch opposition between intellectual "traditionalism" and, respectively, "modernism".¹³ The

¹² Leon Volovici, *Apariția scriitorului în cultura românească*, Iași, Junimea, 1976; Virgil Cândea, "Intellectualul sud-est european în secolul al XVII-lea", in *Rățiunea dominantă. Contribuții la istoria umanismului românesc*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1979, pp. 225-326; Lucia Boia, *Capcanele istoriei. Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950*, București, Humanitas, 2011.

¹³ Z. Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980.

other wrote about Transylvania in the second half of the XIXth century.¹⁴

Besides the fact that it has never employed consistently the typological approach informed by political science theorizing (the works of Gheorghe Brătianu quoted above came closest to this), the scholarship invoked above suffered from always eschewing to tackle the subject in the framework of a (sharply subscribed) distinction between “center” and “periphery”. Connected to this, it has never made systematic recourse to an East European comparative perspective, without also being able – and for the same reasons – to perceive Russia as a paradigmatic laboratory of regional and peripheral ideological development – displaying patterns approximated in the region and throughout the non-western world –, and as an irradiating intellectual (peripheral) center comparable – in terms of its influence on the Romanian and other Balkan and East European cultures – to the West itself. In the same way as previous ones by the same author, the present paper is aimed as a contribution to redressing these drawbacks.

Two caveats are in order before proceeding further. First, one must bear in mind that, when speaking about past ideological developments in peripheral contexts – and primarily in the East European one, the oldest of the kind –, a distinction has to be observed between statements pertaining to the field of political argumentation proper – that can be sorted out along the Left-Right axis –, and others dealing with the predicament of modernization on the western model (accompanied by that of nation-building). Specific ideological statements belonging to the first category could get articulated with different

¹⁴ George Em. Marica, *Studii de istoria și sociologia culturii române ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, vol. 1-3, 1977-1980.

ideological stances of the second type, leading to various intellectual structures. As in other respects, Russian history can be invoked heuristically, in a generalizing manner. Occasionally, its intellectual history could be read as strained – and not only at the time of the classical Slavophile controversy – between the opposite attitudes of (universalistic) rationalism and (particularistic) nationalism, with many intermediate positions. As for the Left-Right axis, it was found useful only for being superimposed on the more fundamental one of ideological attitudes towards universalistic modernization, and as secondarily relevant for describing particular utterances.¹⁵ Sometimes, the distinction between the two intertwining streams of the ideological dynamics has been drawn in a more sophisticated manner. Thus, the record of interwar East European ideological trends could be conceptualized by placing these ones along four different axes, of which one – “democracy *vs.* elitism” – can be said to stay for the classic Left-Right opposition, while the remaining three – comparing “secularism” with “non-secular nativist values”, then “statist” with “anti-statist economic policies” and, respectively, recipes for “open economies” with those for economic closure – are related, from different standpoints, to the issue of how parties and intellectual groups addressed the demand for social-economic and cultural modernization.¹⁶

¹⁵ Leonard Schapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-century Political Thought*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, esp. Chapter. 5: “The ‘Left’ and the ‘Right’ of Nationalism and Rationalism”, pp. 114-142. For comprehensive accounts, see Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1979; William Leatherbarrow, Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹⁶ Daniel Chirot, “Ideology, Reality and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars”, *East European Politics and Societies* 3: 3, 1989, pp. 378-411.

Second, having thus underlined the role of indigenist nationalism as one structuring force stretching through East European ideological development, one must also take care to not overestimate its influence and to not identify it as the face turned inside down of all projects of modernization, reform or revolution. Once again, Russian intellectual history can be invoked for the sake of clarification. Its manifest long-term sensitivity to the issue of the contextual western origins of legalistic principles formulated in universalistic terms could be described as leading to a deeply ingrained attitude of rejecting legal rationalization from the standpoint of a communitarian conception of political association. Shared by most intellectual currents of both the Left and the Right, this way of thinking was hardly put into question by an always endangered tradition of vindicating the values of the rule of law state on a liberal basis.¹⁷

When acknowledging the strength of this anti-Enlightenment intellectual tradition in both western¹⁸ and non-western contexts,¹⁹ it is important to stress that, no matter how paradigmatic for understanding historical evolution throughout the region, Russia has also had sharp specificities, nourished by its very imperial status and international standing, which have put their imprint on its political culture.²⁰ Accordingly, the present article will contend that Romanian and general East European history cannot be meaningfully interpreted from such a

¹⁷ Andrzej Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1992 [1987], esp. Chapter. 1, "The Tradition of the Censure of Law", pp. 9-104.

¹⁸ Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993.

¹⁹ Daniel Chirot, "Modernism without Liberalism: the Ideological Roots of Modern Tyranny", *Contention* 5: 1, 1995, pp. 141-166.

²⁰ Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways", *Russian Review* 45: 2, 1986, pp. 115-181.

standpoint. A strong temptation of doing precisely that has accompanied, however, the departure from communism, and has come to sustain a great number of approaches to the evolution of Romanian political culture, taken with the hindsight of post-totalitarianism and originated in Romania or abroad.²¹ Up to a point understandable, the extensive emphasis placed on the episode of Romanian intellectual fascism and its legacies in order to give account of the same purported diffusiveness of anti-modern nationalism across ages has also tended to get over-stressed,²² with distorting results in terms of over-evaluating the wider cultural impact of the same intellectual sequence.

Although westernizer nationalism has sometimes been depicted misleadingly as a paradoxical compound,²³ the history of nationalist ideologies displays a long record of (partly illusory) efforts targeted at the harmonization between their tenets and those of Enlightenment universalism. An older scholarly tradition meant at disclosing the scope and influence of such strivings and

²¹ Cheng Chen, "The Roots of Illiberal Nationalism in Romania: a Historical Institutional Analysis of the Leninist Legacy", *East European Politics and Societies* 17: 2, 2003, pp. 166-201; Umut Korkut, "Nationalism versus Internationalism: the Roles of Political and Cultural Elites in Interwar and Communist Romania", *Nationalities Papers* 34: 2, 2006, pp. 131-155; Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "Hijacked Modernization: Romanian Political Culture in the 20th Century", *Südosteuropa* 55: 1, 2007, pp. 118-144.

²² Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dan Pavel, "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: the Generation of Angst and Adventure Revisited", *East European Politics and Societies* 8: 3, 1994, pp. 402-438; Matei Călinescu, "The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugène Ionesco)", *East European Politics and Societies* 15: 3, 2001, pp. 649-677.

²³ Dale E. Peterson, "Civilizing the Race: Chaadaev and the Paradoxes of Eurocentric Nationalism", *Russian Review* 56: 4, 1997, pp. 550-563.

illusions²⁴ has recently been reconsidered²⁵. This is only a fresh reminder to the central role that modernizing liberalism with a strong commitment to nation building has played in historical settings defined by developmental disparities. Set in continuity to previous ones,²⁶ the present paper will accordingly proceed by focusing on the canonical interpretations and typology of liberalism, in order to address, then, the varieties and successive departures marking the evolution of left-wing and right-wing ideological orientations in Romania.

2

Romanian and foreign general historical characterizations of Romanian liberalism strangely concurred in underlining its basic homogeneity and defining continuity from the beginning of the XIXth century to the interwar decades. Originally articulated by conservative (*Junimist*) critics of National Liberal Party policies,²⁷ this view was soon adopted, and further elaborated in Romania by

²⁴ Hans Kohn *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background*, New York, Macmillan, 1961 [1944]; Ken Wolf, "Hans Kohn's Liberal Nationalism: the Historian as Prophet", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37: 4, 1976, pp. 651-672.

²⁵ Iván Zoltán Dênes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006; Diana Mishkova, "Liberalism and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century Balkans: toward History and Methodology of Political Transfer", *East European Politics and Societies* 26: 4, 2012, pp. 668-692.

²⁶ See Chapter 6 above.

²⁷ Theodor Rosetti, "Mișcarea socială la noi", *Convorbiri literare* 19: 8, 1885, pp. 609-620; 19: 11, 1886, pp. 911-920; Nicolae Iorga, "Partidele politice în România în secolul al XIX-lea", in *Opinii sincere și periculoase ale unui rău patriot*, ed. și trad. de Andrei Pippidi, București, Humanitas, 2008 [1899, 1900], pp. 187-236; Alexandru Papacostea, "Dezvoltarea ideilor politice în România, în a doua jumătate a veacului XIX" [1916], in *România politică. Doctrină, idei, figuri, 1907-1925*, ed. de Ștefan Zeletin, București, Tipografia "Bucovina" I. E. Torouțiu, [1932], pp. 143-166.

authors meant at advocating the same policies and constructing retrospective defenses for them. Although generally reluctant to adopt such a partisan and apologetic stance in his historical works, the (liberal) historian A. D. Xenopol was the first to offer an influential account of the interconnected growth of the indigenous liberal and conservative trends of thought from the late Phanariot period to 1866, with the underlying implication that both of them, acting as the parties of change and of reaction respectively, continued to develop on the same paths into the XXth century.²⁸ Writing with a clearer hindsight, the declared National Liberal Party apologists of the 1920's, Ștefan Zeletin and Eugen Lovinescu, forcefully rejected all the conservative, traditionalist and agrarian criticisms of the National Liberal Party-sponsored modernization under the label of reaction, also applied by them to local socialism on account of the (purportedly) notorious tendency of the latter to criticize capitalism with an eye turned nostalgically to the traditional ways. Vindicating the oligarchic and statist-interventionist policies deployed by the National Liberal Party – to be mentioned again, below, in connection to their treatment in the international bibliography of the topic – as necessary endowments of accelerated modernization, they also described the ideology and practice of interwar liberalism as the legitimate heirs of early XIXth century “fortyeighter” culture, that had first imported western liberal ideas into the country, in order to respond to underlying social-economic changes (Zeletin) or to set in train such a process of change (Lovinescu).²⁹

²⁸ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*.

²⁹ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul său istoric*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Humanitas, 1991 [1925]; Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Minerva, vols. 1-3, 1992 [1924-1926].

The historiography of political and social-economic life produced under communism necessarily identified a semblance of discontinuity on the historical trajectory of local liberalism, as it had to distinguish between the early – revolutionary and emancipating – stage in the evolution of bourgeoisie and of the capitalist mode of production from the latter one, when the forces of capitalism – together with their liberal ideological underpinnings – came to play a reactionary role, in confrontation with the working class driven by revolutionary socialism. Interwar liberalism was accordingly most often described with the bleak overtones suited for a set of ideas encompassing a harshly exploitative and irretrievably declining social order.³⁰ Still, the historical interpretation of Zeletin and Lovinescu – less emphatically that of Xenopol – came to be canonized by the historiography of intellectual life elaborated at the time, which pointed to it as incarnating the spirit of Enlightenment rationalism against traditionalist obscurantism connected with fascism.³¹ (Zeletin himself had most clearly set the tone for such a view when contrasting the political and modernizing wisdom of the Romanian liberals to the culture of resistance to change inspired by European Romanticism.³²) The thesis of continuity across all ages of local liberalism gained ground under the influence of such works, and the same view was further consolidated by historical approaches to the topic of the first beginnings of cultural modernization in the Romanian Principalities through the importation of western

³⁰ Al. Gh. Savu, *Sistemul partidelor politice din România, 1919-1940*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1976.

³¹ Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate*.

³² Ștefan Zeletin “Romantismul german și cultura critică română” [1929], in *Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Scripta, 1992 [1927], pp. 55-72.

Enlightenment ideas.³³ According to the interpretation thus established, after originally serving as the ideology of the boyar class – and focusing on the demand for national emancipation against Phanariot rule³⁴ – Enlightenment reformist culture was broadened into the revolutionary doctrine of the “fotyeighters”,³⁵ whose legacy was to survive into the later historical stages. An intermediate stage in the process was the discourse of the lower boyardom or the *cărvunari*, featuring in the first two decades of the XIXth century – particularly in Moldavia – and previously characterized by both Xenopol³⁶ and Lovinescu³⁷ – as well as by such other historians of ideas – equally biased ideologically – as the agrarian populist Garabet Ibrăileanu³⁸ or the traditionalist Radu Dragnea³⁹ as halfheartedly open to change but similarly oriented towards intellectual innovation as the more radical – particularly Wallachian – currents of change that were to follow. More recent scholarship invoked above subscribed to the classical interpretation in this respect.⁴⁰

When turning to international bibliography (more) informed by a comparative perspective, we see that the Romanian variety of liberalism is depicted as partaking in the basic features of the regional, East European branch.

³³ Georgescu, *Ideile politice și iluminismul*; Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatura între 1780-1840*, București, Cartea Românească, 2008 [1972].

³⁴ Vlad Georgescu, “The Romanian Boyars in the XVIIIth century: Their Political Ideology”, *East European Quarterly* 18: 1, 1974, pp. 31-40.

³⁵ Cornea, *Originile romantismului*.

³⁶ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 81-142.

³⁷ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol. 1: *Forțele revoluționare*, pp. 43-92.

³⁸ Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească*, ed. de Rodica Rotaru și Alexandru Piru, Chișinău, Litera, 1997 [1909, 1922], pp. 27-44.

³⁹ Radu Dragnea, *Mihail Kogălniceanu*, ed. a II-a, București, [1926], pp. 136-164.

⁴⁰ Cornea, *Originile romantismului*, pp. 169-184.

The absence of an entrepreneurial bourgeois class – understood as a prerequisite for the growth and social entrenchment of the doctrine by both the Marxist and the Weberian accounts of the topic⁴¹ –, accompanied by a strong commitment to the cause of nation building from the part of all political groups (itself a regional predicament⁴²), imparted to local liberalism the defining character of a modernizing ideology prone to chronically favor statist policies to the detriment of the *laissez faire* ideal, narrowing the scope of welfare policies to the benefit of collective national pursuits and allowing a wide space for the mechanisms of oligarchic policies with a clear bent of fake parliamentarianism.⁴³ Gaining very rapidly – after the full establishment of the regime of constitutional monarchy in 1866 – the status of a governmental political force, Romanian liberalism tended to replace lower boyardom with the “bureaucratic class” as the main field of social recruitment.⁴⁴ It departed, in this way, from the more aristocratically based Hungarian variety,⁴⁵ but also from

⁴¹ Richard Ashcraft, “Marx and Weber on Liberalism as Bourgeois Ideology”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14: 2, 1972, pp. 130-168.

⁴² Marco Dogo, Guido Franzinetti, eds., *Disrupting and Reshaping: Early Stages of Nation-building in the Balkans*, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2002; Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity*, London, Tauris Academic Studies, 2006.

⁴³ Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1969 [1951], pp. 108-112; Andrew C. Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: the Case of Romania”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 72-116.

⁴⁴ Janos, “Modernization and Decay”; Gale Stokes, “The Social Origins of East European Politics”, *East European Politics and Societies* 1: 1, 1986, pp. 30-74.

⁴⁵ Stokes, “The Social Origins of East European Politics”, pp. 41-51; William O. McCagg, “Ennoblement in Dualistic Hungary”, *East*

such regional varieties – like the Russian or the Polish ones – that were confined to the oppositional status for longer periods and therefore shifted from the gentry to the intelligentsia in this respect.⁴⁶

This overall characterization applying to the East European liberalism generally and to the Romanian case specifically made the object of some attempts at qualification or revision. Thus, the bureaucratic and statist perversion of liberal ideas and policies in the context of delayed modernization could be described as just the local manifestations of the generic “sectarian liberalism” emerging in the West in the last decades of the XIXth century, as a narrow class ideology of the upper bourgeoisie, following the moment when fundamental liberal principles had gained virtual universal acceptance across all parts of the political spectrum.⁴⁷ Also, the primacy of the nationalist commitment over genuine liberal concerns – already in place at the middle of the XIXth century – could be reinterpreted as less of an original evil inescapably propelling peripheral liberalism on a perverted path of development than as the core of the ideological compound of “liberal nationalism”, with a quasi-universal spreading – although marked by significant variations –

European Quarterly 5: 1, 1971, pp. 13-26. Compare Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982.

⁴⁶ George Fischer, *Russian Liberalism: from Gentry to Intelligentsia*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958. Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*, transl. by Danuta Przekop, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004, pp. 113-146.

⁴⁷ Victoria F. Brown, “The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: the Case of Romanian Liberalism”, in Stephen Fischer-Galati et al., eds., *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1982, pp. 269-301, relying on Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900*, New York, Harper, 1941.

at the time, staying as a legitimate heir of the universalistic Enlightenment project⁴⁸ and resurrected at the close of the XXth century by schools of political thought both in the West and in Eastern Europe.⁴⁹

Not even such qualifications have put into question, however, the conception of the basic continuity of Romanian liberalism across the entire period of pre-communist modernization. Indeed, while older works focusing on the decades when the liberal creed was articulated as an oppositional discourse underscore its contribution to nation building, without asking the question of whether and how the same discourse was transformed after the first stage of the process was completed, in the 1860's,⁵⁰ recent revisionist works are explicit in emphasizing that fortyeighter liberalism was streamlined on a statist path of evolution leading to the interwar interventionist economic policies.⁵¹ However, a deeper survey of the recent theoretical and comparative bibliography on liberalism and on its East European varieties can enable us to dissent from the continuity thesis and identify successive departures in the evolution of the leading modernizing Romanian ideology.

⁴⁸ Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity*. Compare Maciej Janowski, "Wavering Friendships: Liberal and National Ideas in Nineteenth-century East-Central Europe", *Ab Imperio* 3-4, 2000, pp. 69-90.

⁴⁹ Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993; G. M. Tamás, "Ethnarchy and Ethnoanarchism", *Social Research* 63: 1, 1996, pp. 147-190.

⁵⁰ John C. Campbell, *French Influence and the Rise of Roumanian Nationalism: the Generation of 1848*, New York, Arno Press, 1971 [1940].

⁵¹ Diana Mishkova, "The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism", in Dénes, ed., *Liberty and the Search for Identity*, pp. 399-456.

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Treated historically over the widest span of time and at in most general terms, liberalism could be seen as the defining core of western modernity. Its conception of freedom under the rule of law only offered a new theoretical solution to the problem of maintaining society as autonomous from the state and endowing it with the means to oppose the despotic tendencies of political power. Such a concern, alien to ancient, Greek-Roman political thought, underlined the conflictual church-state relations in the western Middle Ages. The split of the western Christendom in the XVIth century left society without an institution and a doctrine strong enough to perform the function of protecting its separateness and, in the context of the religious wars ensuing from this, states threatened to expand prodigiously at the expense of autonomous social life. Hence, it was liberalism which renewed western dualism in a secular guise.⁵² It can be seen, therefore, as just another name for the mature stage of that surge to political pluralism which originated in the West with the church-state dualism and eventually acted as the main engine for western expansionist energies and imperialist power.⁵³

While the view of the centrality of liberalism to the rise of the West is basically accepted by recent critiques of the imperialistically self-serving and ideologically biased grand narrative of modernization,⁵⁴ one must refrain from employing it in a reductionist way. The

⁵² Frederick Watkins, *The Political Tradition of the West: a Study in the Development of Modern Liberalism*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1962 [1948], pp. 31-89.

⁵³ John A. Hall, *Powers and Liberties: the Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985.

⁵⁴ Siep Stuurman, "The Canon of the History of Political Thought: Its Critique and a Proposed Alternative", *History and Theory* 39: 2, 2000, pp. 147-166; Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012 [2006], esp. pp. 240-266.

foundations of western exceptionalism were deep, wide and intricate, and the origins of western propensity to pluralism has to be searched for much beyond the implications of church-state – or state-society – theoretical dualism, by taking into consideration such factors as the specific type of parcellization of power in the frame of medieval feudalism – including the inner contractualist dimension of the latter, which bestowed a long-term legacy on western political culture and social practices⁵⁵ –, the specific type of urban autonomy developing in the West after the year 1000⁵⁶ and the interplay between bureaucratic rationalization and the rise of capitalist economy starting with the XVIth century.⁵⁷ Liberalism capitalized on this entire historical evolution, and the geography of its varieties has accordingly been dependent on the morphology of the lags of development and on their long-term implications. It has most acutely depended on the differences between political traditions emanating from the medieval and early modern prevalence of feudalism – in the West and (in a truncated form) in the areas of Central and East-

⁵⁵ Jenő Szűcs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe”, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29: 2-4, 1983, pp. 131-184; Ivan Berend, “The Historical Evolution of Eastern Europe as a Region”, in Ellen Comisso, Laura D’Andrea Tyson, eds., *Power, Purpose and Collective Choice: Economic Strategy in Socialist States*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 153-170; Gianfranco Poggi, “Max Weber’s Conceptual Portrait of Feudalism”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 39: 2, 1988, pp. 211-227.

⁵⁶ Daniel Chirot, “The Rise of the West”, *American Sociological Review* 50: 2, 1985, pp. 181-195; George Schöpflin, “The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe”, in Stephen R. Graubard, ed., *Eastern Europe...Central Europe...Europe*, Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1991, pp. 59-94.

⁵⁷ N. Birnbaum, “Conflicting Interpretations of the Rise of Capitalism: Marx and Weber”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 4: 2, 1953, pp. 125-141; Michael Hechter, “Lineages of the Capitalist State”, *The American Journal of Sociology* 85: 2, 1977, pp. 1057-1074.

Central Europe⁵⁸ – and, respectively, from that of the patrimonial type of monarchic government, prevalent in Russia and in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁹ In the same fashion as that of the forms of Enlightenment thinking, the span of the varieties liberalism, stretching from West to East, have been rooted in specific social circumstances and cultural environments.⁶⁰

As a XIXth century trend of thought – no matter how constitutive to the functioning of modern political life generally, and to the presuppositions of all political ideologies⁶¹ –, liberalism emerged at the interplay between various processes of change and by confrontation to other intellectual currents. An older historical account described it as the end product of a dynamic of political development dominated, first, by the tradition of estates freedom with medieval origins and then by the bureaucratic structuring of the state and its separation from the social order, at the time of absolutism.⁶² For a long time, modern freedom centered upon securing individual rights against collective pursuits has been contrasted favorably by such accounts

⁵⁸ Szűcs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe”.

⁵⁹ Vatro Murvar, “Patrimonial-Feudal Dichotomy and Political Structure in Pre-revolutionary Russia: One Aspect of the Dialogue between the Ghost of Marx and Weber”, *The Sociological Quarterly* 12, 1971, pp. 500-524; Serif Mardin, “Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11: 3, 1969, pp. 258-281.

⁶⁰ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “The Enlightenment East and West: a Comparative Perspective on the Ideological Origins of the Balkan Political Traditions”, in *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1994, pp. 51-70.

⁶¹ Watkins, *The Political Tradition of the West*, pp. 238-270.

⁶² Guido de Ruggiero, *A History of European Liberalism*, transl. by R. G. Collingwood, Boston, Beacon Press, 1961 [1927], pp. 1-13; Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany*, transl. by Christiane Banerji, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 1-27.

to the tradition of ancient freedom based on the idea of self-government through political participation.⁶³ Over the past several decades, the republican tradition celebrating civic virtue against individualistic selfishness has been vindicated theoretically⁶⁴ and reconsidered historically at great length.⁶⁵ Accordingly, the modern political landscape has come to be understood as shaped – over the early modern centuries and up to the period of the American and French revolutions – by the interconnected streams of (proto-)liberalism and republicanism,⁶⁶ and the survivals of the latter into the XIXth century have been underscored – by disclosing them in the texture of socialist thought, alongside the democratic radicalism of the time⁶⁷ – to the same extent as the departures taken from within its fold towards the stream of liberal conservatism.⁶⁸ A reconsideration of

⁶³ J. L. Talmon, *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1952; Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, in *Four Essays on Liberty*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 118-172.

⁶⁴ Quentin Skinner, “The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty”, in Gisela Bock et al., eds., *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 293-309; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: a Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

⁶⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Maurizio Viroli, *Republicanism*, transl. by Antony Shugaar, New York, Hill and Wang, 2002.

⁶⁶ Joyce O. Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in Historical Imagination*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1992.

⁶⁷ Gregory Claeys, “The Origins of the Rights of Labor: Republicanism, Commerce and the Construction of Modern Social Theory in Britain, 1796-1805”, *The Journal of Modern History* 66: 2, 1994, pp. 249-290.

⁶⁸ Andreas Kalyvas, Ira Katzenelson, “Embracing Liberalism: Germaine de Staël’s Farewell to Republicanism”, in Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., *From Republican Polity to National Community*:

radical Enlightenment – together with its republican modes of political thought (including the Jacobin one) – against its moderate counterpart was put forward accordingly.⁶⁹

Political regimes predicated upon the entrenched power of the estates and, respectively, absolutist governments did not arise, in the countries of Eastern Europe, as successive stages of political evolution produced by endogenous social developments. The very feeble representative bodies of the boyardom were curtailed by Russian autocracy in the XVIth century, such that later on absolutism came to reign supreme, without encountering any resistance from the part of estate assemblies.⁷⁰ In neighboring Poland, the opposite situation prevailed, with the monarchy placed on an elective basis in 1572 and political power vested almost entirely in the *Sejm*, in the framework of an aristocratic republic.⁷¹ Later on, once aristocratic anarchy revealed its tremendous negative consequences leading to state atrophy and territorial partition between the surrounding absolutist empires, institutional rationalization taking a leaf from the centralist model was attempted at an

Reconsiderations of Enlightenment Political Thought, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2003, pp. 167-190.

⁶⁹ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁷⁰ Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: a Study in Political Culture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 1-26. See, for a mild qualification, Daniel Rowland, “Did Muscovite Literary Ideology Place Limits to the Power of the Tsar (1540’s-1660’s)?”, *Russian Review* 49: 2, 1990, 125-155.

⁷¹ Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawikz, “Anti-monarchism in Polish Republicanism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in Martin van Gelderen, Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: a Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1: *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 43-60.

accelerated pace, with a corresponding search for mingling the two types of government on the basis of a constitution sustained by Enlightenment principles.⁷² Although disintegration at the hands of foreign imperialism could not be halted, bureaucratization proceeded further, hand in hand with the partial dismantling of estates power, in the framework of the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw, between 1807 and 1815.⁷³ In XVIIIth century Hungary, local estates came to confront Habsburg absolutism prone to expand at their expense,⁷⁴ while in the Romanian Principalities the XVIIth century “boyar state”⁷⁵ was followed by the absolutist experiments of the Phanariot princes imposed by the Ottoman Empire. Western intellectual influences got articulated with these various local institutional arrangements, in order to give rise to specific ideological constructs. The message of the moderate Enlightenment came to nourish the enterprises of paternalist modernization carried over by enlightened absolutism, promoted either as a domestic force or in an imperial guise. The republican view of radical Enlightenment challenged, at various degrees in different places, this mainstream ideological orientation.

The legacies of estates government – either real or (largely) imagined retrospectively – compounded, in some places, the relation between the two strands of thought. In Poland, where a strong tradition of civic humanism went back to Renaissance times, the Commonwealth of the

⁷² Jerzy Lukowski, “Recasting Utopia: Montesquieu, Rousseau and the Polish Constitution of 3 May 1791”, *The Historical Journal* 37: 1, 1994, pp. 65-87.

⁷³ Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*, pp. 19-32.

⁷⁴ Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary*, pp. 16-26; Iván Zoltán Dénes, “The Value Systems of Liberals and Conservatives in Hungary, 1830-1848”, *The Historical Journal* 36: 4, 1993, pp. 825-850.

⁷⁵ Stănescu, “Valoarea istorică și literară a cronicilor muntene”.

nobility was enmeshed very early in the discourse of republicanism,⁷⁶ much in the same way as the same discourse – originally tailored to the political life of Italian city-states – was applied to parliamentary politics in the context of the English Puritan Revolution, and in the larger one of the Anglo-American world all throughout the XVIIth and the XVIIIth centuries.⁷⁷ In the early XIXth century, a process of reimagining the history of indigenous political tradition unfolded on the basis of a fusion between emerging liberalism and Romantic nationalism, with an old Polish or “Sarmatian” conception of liberty discovered at the very roots of national development and eventually interpreted by such authors as Joachim Lelewel or Adam Mickiewicz as a diffuse feature of old Slavic society.⁷⁸ The Decembrist strand of liberalism in early XIXth century Russia similarly invented a tradition of communal self-government projected backwards to the Kievan, pre-Mongol times, with scattered pockets of surviving freedom disclosed in the political landscape of the following centuries, up to the imposition of strict Muscovite rule in the XVIth century.⁷⁹ While much less favorable to radical ideas, and accordingly less prone to indulge in retrospective utopias

⁷⁶ Edward Opaliński, “Civic Humanism and Republican Citizenship in the Polish Renaissance”, in Martin van Gelderen, Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: a Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1: *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 147-166.

⁷⁷ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*; See also Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstances of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies*, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2004 [1959].

⁷⁸ Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1999, p. 26-27, 33.

⁷⁹ Andrzej Walicki, “Russian Social Thought: an Introduction to the Intellectual History of Nineteenth Century Russia”, *Russian Review* 36: 1, 1977, pp. 3-4.

highlighting golden ages of political liberty, Hungarian liberalism also pointed out, occasionally, to the Early Modern institutions of the provincial assemblies as repositories of a political wisdom ready to be resurrected in order to draw from it support for its struggles against the Habsburg order and the conservatives, carried on under the ideal of extending noble privileges to the whole of the social body.⁸⁰ The neo-Hellenic late Enlightenment and early liberalism was sharply divided between a dominant ideology of enlightened absolutism and a minority republican discourse.⁸¹ With a “third estate” social basis and lacking a tradition of aristocratic politics behind it, the modernizing ideological trend nevertheless started by elaborating its political projects by reference to a territorial frame recalling the memory of the Byzantine Empire.⁸²

Taking advantage of such comparative references to the force of the estates tradition in Eastern Europe at the turn of the XVIIIth to the XIXth centuries – either by its living institutional survivals or by the influence of its (invented) memory – one can identify two successive departures in the early evolution of Romanian liberalism, that have to be set against the prevailing view of its linear growth from inside the welter of Enlightenment imported ideas. When read from this newly acquired perspective, Gheorghe Brătianu’s work meant to ponder the scope and influence of the estates assemblies in Romanian traditional society emerges as a major contribution to the

⁸⁰ Dénes, “The Value Systems of Liberals and Conservatives in Hungary”, p. 831.

⁸¹ Raphael Demos, “The Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19: 4, 1958, pp. 523-541; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 167-182.

⁸² Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “An Enlightenment Perspective on Balkan Cultural Pluralism: the Republican Vision of Rhigas Velestinlis”, *History of Political Thought* 24: 3, 2003, pp. 465-479.

history of political ideas – which has hitherto never been considered in the bibliography of the question –, staying at odds, moreover, with the main trust of the historical canon. Without ever explicitly taking issue with this canonical view, Brătianu treats western intellectual influences as of lesser importance, in terms of their contribution to the unfolding of ideological debate in the principalities up to the early 1820's, than internal historical references, with their underlying symbolism. When approached in this light, the *cărvunari* discourse of the lower boyardom emerges – against the established view – not as the first stage of fortyeighter culture, but as the last prominent manifestation of a type of political thinking focused upon the virtues of the old regime arrangements and meant at refurbishing them after an intervening age of decline and corruption.⁸³

The baseline for the first stage of modern Romanian ideological development was set by the Phanariot reforms of the 1740's, when prince Constantin Mavrocordat introduced a sharp separation – predicated upon the criterion of office-holding –, between the higher *protipendada* boyardom and the lesser echelons of the same boyar class.⁸⁴ A Romanian gentry ideology arose accordingly, alongside a discourse of the magnate nobility, in this social and institutional framework. Both discourses were characteristically expressed by “projects of reform” addressed to foreign courts (most often the

⁸³ Compare J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: a Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1957.

⁸⁴ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, “Două veacuri de la reforma lui Constantin Mavrocordat” [1946], in *Adunările de stări în Europa și țările române în Evul Mediu*, ed. de Șerban Papacostea, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996, pp. 265-290.

Habsburg and Russian ones).⁸⁵ They were, moreover, sustained by the same anti-Phanariot stance, rejecting princely despotism of alien origins in the name of boyar privileges rooted in the indigenous estates customs and institutions. However, while the latter one defended local ways against pernicious absolutist innovations by invoking the sacrosanct authority of the “Mavrocordat constitution”, the first one did the same by looking beyond that historical layer, to the pre-Phanariot, XVIIth century age of the “boyar state”, when the estates had enjoyed their most powerful influence, in conjunction with a larger membership.⁸⁶ Calling for a resurrection of the state of estates in its genuine, non-corrupted form, the *cărvunari* ardently demanded the broadening of existing political arrangements, to be accomplished primarily by the means of their own enfranchisement as members with full rights of the system of corporate privileges.⁸⁷ Occasionally, as in the case of the 1802 project for an “aristocratic-democratic republic” designed by Dimitrie Sturdza – which ruled out the princely office entirely, providing instead for a three chambers assembly, with the lower chamber including members from among the non-privileged population⁸⁸ –, or in the still more conspicuous one of the project for a “*cărvunari*

⁸⁵ Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor*, pp. 185-210; Georgescu, *Ideile politice și iluminismul*.

⁸⁶ Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor*, pp. 222; Stănescu, “Valoarea istorică și literară a cronicilor muntene”.

⁸⁷ Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor*, pp. 234-235.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 211-213. See also E. Virtosu, *Napoleon Bonaparte și proiectul unei “republici aristo-democraticești” în Moldova la 1802*, București, n. p., 1946; Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*, p. 148; Valeriu Șotropa, *Proiectele de constituție, programele de reforme și petițiile de drepturi din țările române în secolul al XVIII-lea și prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1976, pp. 41-44.

constitution” of 1822, designed by Ionică Tăutu,⁸⁹ such claims for the reinstatement of full-blown estates government were tainted by strong influences of republican-Jacobin political thought coming from the West. One must beware of mistaking – as it has repeatedly been done before⁹⁰ – such foreign intellectual additions to the gentry discourse for its core ideas, focused as they were not on the enterprise of modernization and democratization by the means of ideological imports but on the eagerness to remove the foreign corruptive influences of bureaucratic absolutism from over the indigenous institutions of boyar rule. As late as 1839, the political project of Leonte Radu shows strange reminiscences of gentry constitutional thinking – and it was rightly ascribed by Lovinescu to *cărvunărism* on account of its reluctant liberalism⁹¹ –, due to its exotic and singular proposal of reinforcing the boyar status on the basis of a hierarchy of aristocratic titles of western provenance.⁹²

At one moment – the 1821 revolt led by Tudor Vladimirescu in Wallachia, with an impact in the neighboring principality, started in conjunction with the

⁸⁹ Full text in Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 559-586. See also Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor*, pp. 222-238; Ionică Tăutu, *Scrieri social-politice*, ed. de E. Virtosu, București, Editura Științifică, 1974.

⁹⁰ Most extensively in D. V. Barnoschi, *Originile democrației române. “Cărvunarii”. Constituția Moldovei de la 1822*, Iași, “Viața Românească”, 1922. See also Cornea, *Originile romantismului*, pp. 169-184; Georgescu, “The Romanian Boyars in the XVIIIth century”.

⁹¹ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol. 1: *Forțele revoluționare*, pp. 59-60.

⁹² “Mémoire pour toutes les violations des lois et tous les abus qui se commettent en Moldavie depuis l’introduction des nouvelles institutions”, in Vlad Georgescu, dir., *Mémoires et projets de réforme dans les Principautés Roumaines*, vol. 2: 1831-1848, Bucarest, Association Internationale d’Études du Sud-Est Européen, 1972, pp. 113-136; Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*, p. 94.

Greek anti-Ottoman war of liberation but rapidly separated from it and propelled on a national path –, political discourse adopted radical overtones coming from the popular revolutionary culture mushrooming at the grass-roots level of Balkan society⁹³ and itself nourished by a multifaceted intercourse with the West.⁹⁴ Outbursts of radicalism were few in Romanian lands at the time, however. Comparative works have underlined both the small resonance of local society to the Balkan tradition of popular rebelliousness⁹⁵ – in spite of the fact that the regional *hajduk* culture did make some inroads into the Romanian peasant world⁹⁶ – and the feebleness of the Romanian expressions of radical Enlightenment and republican thinking, by comparison to the other South-East European countries.⁹⁷ Related to the Balkans by virtue of their cultural makeup, the Principalities were blatantly similar to Russia, Poland and Hungary in terms of their social structure, featuring a strong landholding class – mostly of native origins – with unbroken continuity across the centuries of Ottoman domination.⁹⁸ Deep sited ideological conservatism went together with the inherent conservatism of the social order.

⁹³ Oțetea, Tudor Vladimirescu; Traian Stoianovich, “The Social Foundations of Balkan Politics, 1750-1941”, Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, eds., *The Balkans in Transition*, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974 [1963], pp. 297-345; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “Balkan Mentality”: History, Legend, Imagination“, *Nations and Nationalism* 2: 2, 1996, pp. 163-191.

⁹⁴ Traian Stoianovich, “The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant”, *The Journal of Economic History* 20: 2, 1960, pp. 234-313.

⁹⁵ Stoianovich, “The Social Foundations of Balkan Politics”.

⁹⁶ Dimitrije Djordjevic, Steffen Fischer-Galati, *The Balkan Revolutionary Tradition*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981. Compare Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New York, Norton, 1965 [1959], pp. 13-29.

⁹⁷ Kitromilides, “The Enlightenment East and West”.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; Stokes, “The Social Origins of East European Politics”.

No matter the structural differences between Russia, (East-)Central Europe and the Balkans, the democratic commitment of XIXth century liberalism tended to take a descending slope in all the three East European sub-regions. Thus, in the Greek world, a social structure displaying a stronger emergent middle class already at the beginning of the XIXth century⁹⁹ offered the prerequisites for a more radical departure of political thought. Still, liberalism consummated, here, its populist and democratic energies soon thereafter during the century, later relapsing into authoritarian politics, militarism and clientelism predicated on the demands of nation building and national aggrandizement.¹⁰⁰ Following the failure of the Decembrist rising in 1825, Russian liberalism abandoned its original revolutionary stance.¹⁰¹ After an eclipse of political pleading in favor of philosophical speculation, during the 1830's and the 1840's, when Russian intellectual circles were absorbed primarily by the dilemmas of national self-definition and of the relation to the West, in terms of the Hegelian view of history,¹⁰² liberalism reemerged – by gradual disentanglement from Hegelianism – in a conservative guise, embodied in the isolated figure of Boris

⁹⁹ Stoianovich, "The Social Foundations of Balkan Politics"; Daniel Chirot, Karen Barkey, "States in Search of Legitimacy. Was There Nationalism in the Balkans of the Early Nineteenth Century?", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 24: 1-2, 1983, pp. 30-46.

¹⁰⁰ Kitromilides, "The Enlightenment East and West"; Ioannis Tassopoulos, "The Experiment of Inclusive Constitutionalism, 1909-1932", in Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., *Eleftherios Venizelos: the Trials of Statesmanship*, Edinburg, Edinburg University Press, 2006, pp. 251-272.

¹⁰¹ Walicki, "Russian Social Thought", pp. 5-6.

¹⁰² Ana Siljak, "Between East and West: Hegel and the Origins of the Russian Dilemma", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62: 2, 2001, pp. 335-358.

Chicherin.¹⁰³ Although leaning gradually towards embracing social concerns (we shall come back to this below), it would never recover a radical temper.¹⁰⁴ Hungarian liberalism reached the zenith of its radical-democratic discourse at the time of the 1848 revolution, in order to narrow its vision and get into a virtual symbiosis with its conservative rival after the compromise of 1867 with the Habsburg court, on the platform of nation building in a multinational setting.¹⁰⁵ Polish liberalism got disentangled from its fusion with Romantic national messianism and, after the failure of the 1863 anti-Russian uprising, put into brackets political activism for the goal of national liberation, turned enthusiastically to the European sources of positivist culture meant to sustain “organic work” in the service of modernization and subscribed to the tenets of the classical doctrine of the contemporary West, as exposed by John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer.¹⁰⁶ In the 1880’s, however, it lost ground very rapidly to the rival political orientations of “national democracy” and socialism.¹⁰⁷ Squeezed between the two contending camps, it would never reemerge as a

¹⁰³ Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism*, pp. 105-164; Gary M. Hamburg, “Peasant Emancipation and Russian Social Thought: the Case of Boris N. Chicherin”, *Slavic Review* 50: 4, 1991, pp. 890-904.

¹⁰⁴ Schapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-century Political Thought*, pp. 143-169.

¹⁰⁵ Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary*, pp. 96-105; Dénes, “The Value Systems of Liberals and Conservatives in Hungary”, p. 848-850.

¹⁰⁶ Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*, pp. 147-188; Brian A. Porter, “The Social Nation and Its Futures: English Liberalism and Polish Nationalism in Late Nineteenth-century Warsaw”, *American Historical Review* 101: 5, 1996, pp. 1470-1492.

¹⁰⁷ Brian A. Porter, “Democracy and Discipline in Late Nineteenth-century Poland”, *The Journal of Modern History* 71: 2, 1999, pp. 346-393.

determining voice in the public space up until after the fall of communism.¹⁰⁸

The only significant exceptions to the rule of the shift to the Right suffered by East European liberalism under the combined pressures of retarded modernization and delayed nation building are offered by the cases of Serbian and Bulgarian ideological development. After a characteristic flirtation with Romantic-Slavophile ideas during the age of the 1848 revolution, as also after performing its mission of bringing to the country the basic ideas of parliamentary constitutionalism, Serbian liberalism was superseded from the Left, in the 1870's, by an ideology of radicalism equally indebted to the anti-Romantic, positivistic and scientist culture prevalent in western Europe in the second half of the XIXth century and to the Russian populist vision, which relied on the design of an advancement towards socialism on the basis of peasant communalism.¹⁰⁹ Transformed into a political party in 1881, this brand of radicalism would survive as the dominant ideological voice in Serbia – and in Serbian-dominated interwar Yugoslavia –, over the following decades,¹¹⁰ facing challenges from parties and ideologies placed farther to the Left and acting under democratic, agrarian, and communist banners.¹¹¹ Put in train at a

¹⁰⁸ Jerzy Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism*, transl. by Chester A. Kisiel, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1995, pp. 43-72.

¹⁰⁹ Traian Stoianovich, "The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution, 1830-1880", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1: 3, 1959, pp. 242-272.

¹¹⁰ Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development: the Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-century Serbia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1990, pp. 291-306.

¹¹¹ Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1974, pp. 204-213.

latter moment, Bulgarian ideological evolution followed a trajectory closely resembling the Serbian one.¹¹²

Once again, it is in the light of this more elaborate comparative view that we can grasp the contours of the second stage in the history of Romanian liberal ideology. The departure of fortyeighter liberalism from the gentry discourse of the *cărvunari* took place along three interconnected trajectories. First, contemporary western world replaced the traditional institutions of the old regime as the main reference invoked for the sake of evaluating contemporary local society and was adopted as an inescapable standard for measuring its low performance and indicting its ills. This change of emphasis appears as already definitive in Dinicu Golescu's travel account of 1826, imbued with unqualified admiration for western achievements.¹¹³ The drive to the West – the other side of the drive to evade from the Balkans, which has come to be considered, recently, as somehow more important than it¹¹⁴ – would then continue unimpaired up until the end of the century.

Second, although preserved and strengthened, the tendency of reimagining the past for the purpose of criticizing the present was itself greatly readjusted. Subordinated to the privileged comparison with the much more conspicuous European brilliance of the time, it was practiced, now, in conjunction with the last one. Past arrangements came to be seen as worth mentioning in so far as they could contribute to the rejuvenation of society

¹¹² Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878-1918: a History*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1983, pp. 325-347; Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, pp. 333-353.

¹¹³ Dinicu Golescu, *Însemnare a călătoriei mele*, ed. de D. Panaitescu-Perpessicius, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1952 [1826].

¹¹⁴ Sorin Antohi, "Romania and the Balkans: from Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology", *Tr@nsit-Virtuelles Forum* 21, 2002, pp. 1-31. Compare Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, sec. ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 46-49.

in accordance with the western model. Furthermore, a new historical reference was found in the midst of the national past, suited for a new kind of reformist advocacy: going beyond the age of the XVIIth century “boyar states” – targeted by the *cărvunari* discourse as best incorporating the wisdom of mixed government –, the new brand of ideological history discovered the golden age of Romanian society in the world of princely dominated medieval states predating the growth of boyar power, itself coming together with the imposition of tight Ottoman domination and with the Greek infiltration later to be formalized as Phanariot rule. Much in the same way as the old Slavic institutions of communal self-government invoked by the Russian Decembrists, the Polish Romantic liberals and the Serbian radicals as encapsulating a propensity to political freedom taking ahead of that of the West itself, medieval Wallachia and Moldavia came to be depicted as quasi-egalitarian societies of (mostly) propertied peasants not subjected to exploitation on boyar domains and ready to give military support to strongly centralized states. Accordingly, princely rule of the primeval times was seen as paternalistic and exercised with the help of a boyardom of warriors and office-holders. This historical account sustaining democratic prophecy came full-blown in an 1846 article by Nicolae Bălcescu,¹¹⁵ in order to get a large-scale expression in his posthumous unfinished history of the Wallachian late XVIth century prince Michael the Brave.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Nicolae Bălcescu, “Despre starea socială a muncitorilor plugari în Principatele Române în deosebite timpuri” [1846], in *Opere*, ed. de G. Zane și Elena G. Zane, București, Editura Academiei R. S. R., vol. 1, 1974, pp. 156-157.

¹¹⁶ Idem, *Românii supt Mihai-Voievod Viteazul*, ed. de G. C. Nicolescu, București, Minerva, 1970 [1861-1863], pp. 19-30.

Third, the older advocacy for enlarged noble parliamentarism is replaced by a growing perception of the political system as marred at its roots by deeply unjust social arrangements. Accordingly, social criticism with populist overtones, targeting the boyar class as a parasitic oligarchy and pleading the cause of peasant liberation from feudal economic exploitation emerges as the favorite expression of democratic radicalism. Inaugurated by gentry figures and occasionally promoted by members of the upper boyardom – like Golescu himself – before being taken over, increasingly, by intelligentsia figures of non-noble origins, this discourse gains ground among oppositional circles after the *protipendada* is reentrenched in power – following a brief eclipse between 1822 and 1827¹¹⁷ –, with its supremacy supported by the Russian protectorate, formalized by the Organic Statutes imposed by Russia in 1831 and enhanced by the commercialized agriculture developing after 1829 and favoring the large boyar domains. Animated by a vision of social harmonization above class struggle and taking inspiration from pre-Marxist socialism,¹¹⁸ the ideology of fortyeighter liberalism – epitomized by the Wallachian constitutional project of 1848¹¹⁹ – nevertheless vacillated over the design of agrarian reform¹²⁰ and subscribed to the doctrine of free-trade, perceived as a prerequisite for maintaining and consolidating the western connection but in fact playing

¹¹⁷ Filitti, “Frământările politice și sociale”, pp. 147-171.

¹¹⁸ G. Zane, “Saint-simonism și fourierism în România” [1970], in *Studii*, ed. de Elena G. Zane, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980, pp. 61-81.

¹¹⁹ “Proclamația de la Islaz” [1848], in Paul Cornea, Mihai Zamfir, coord., *Gândirea românească în epoca pașoptistă*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1969, pp. 49-61.

¹²⁰ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 284-293.

at the hands of boyar, cereal-exporting interests.¹²¹ Some of its representatives even came to value boyardom as an integral part of a healthy social body and identified themselves by a “conservative” label.¹²² Overall, however, the populist-democratic rhetoric survived unaltered across the defeat of the revolutionary uprisings and throughout the following years, spent in exile by most members of the revolutionary party. Although never effective in initiating social policies and hardly prepared to sacrifice the class interests of its promoters for the sake of putting into practice wholeheartedly their professed ideals, this brand of democratic radicalism enjoyed a greater public resonance than allowed by comparative historical approaches underscoring the constitutive ideological timidity of Romanian modernizing liberalism of Enlightenment progeny, coming from the inescapable force of its social constraints.¹²³ Having said this, it is the more so important to highlight the discursive transformation taking place in the two principalities, then in the Romanian state, between 1856 and 1876, with a turning point during the 1860’s.

5

Unlike in Serbia and Bulgaria, Romanian ideological dynamics was marked, starting with the last four decades of the XIXth century, by a tendency of leaning towards the Right, which would continue uninterrupted up to the years of the Second World War. This evolution was

¹²¹ Eugen Demetrescu, *Liberalismul economic în evoluția României moderne*, București, n. p., 1940.

¹²² I. Eliade Rădulescu, *Echilibrul între antiteze*, ed. de Petre V. Haneș, București, Minerva, vol. 1, 1916 [1859-1869], pp. 57-178; Radu Tomoioga, “Paternitatea articolelor din *Conservatorul*”, in *Personalități și tendințe în perioada pașoptistă*, București, Minerva, 1976, pp. 161-169.

¹²³ Kitromilides, “The Enlightenment East and West”.

inaugurated by a new departure of liberalism itself. Previously described – when noticed at all – as just the result of discursive maturation suffered by the doctrine when confronting the requirements of practical politics, after leaving behind the revolutionary age – and enhanced by the very physical maturation of some of its main exponents¹²⁴ –, the turning point in question has to be characterized, in fact, as a genuine new beginning along a fractured historical path. When attaining political adulthood, fortyeightism was transformed beyond recognition into precisely that brand of authoritarian modernizing liberalism whose image was to be projected backwards in time by the legitimating historical views of Xenopol, Zeletin and Lovinescu, misleadingly followed in this respect by later scholarship, Romanian and foreign alike. This metamorphosis took place in connection with internal political development, itself unfolded in a changing international setting.

Taking advantage of the end of the Russian protectorate – supportive of the *protipendada*-dominated social order – in 1854 – as a result of western allied military intervention against Russia’s renewed expansionist drive in the Balkans – and of its replacement with a system of regional security sponsored primarily by Second Empire France – following the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War in 1856 –, fortyeighter liberalism got immersed, at first, in an all-encompassing “national party” devoted to the cause of the union

¹²⁴ P. Constantinescu-Iași et al., coord., *Istoria României*, București, Editura Academiei R. P. R., vol. 4, 1964, pp. 518-571; Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între Unire și Independență*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979; Gheorghe Platon, coord., *Istoria românilor*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, vol. 7/2, 2003, pp. 149-232.

between the two Principalities,¹²⁵ in order to make then its governmental apprenticeship in united Romania after 1859, under princes Alexandru Ioan Cuza and Carol I. Large scale political regroupings within the still informally organized liberal and conservative camps accompanied tremendous governmental instability up to 1871, when a semblance of stability was obtained – with the Crown starting to get elevated to the position of a largely autonomous power-actor always aiming to draw the political agenda – in the new international framework created by German unification.¹²⁶ A conservative tenure between 1871 and 1876 – marked by the formal structuring of the National Liberal Party in 1875 – was followed by a much more effective liberal one between 1876 and 1888, correspondingly marked by the emergence of the Conservative Party in 1880. Briefly put into question by the European crisis focused upon the Balkans of 1875 – leading to the proclamation of Romanian full independence towards the Porte in 1877 –, German-dominated international order was entrenched by the Congress of Berlin of 1878 – followed by the international recognition of Romania as a kingdom in 1881 – and the establishment of the Triple Alliance in 1882 – joined by Romania in 1883. The system of two-parties rotation in power would then continue to function undisturbed up into the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath, with the National Liberal Party established as the privileged governmental political force and increasingly enmeshed in a strong flavor of clientelism, due to the growing control exercised over the

¹²⁵ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 302-372; Mihai Cojocariu, *Partida națională și constituirea statului român (1856-1859)*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 1995.

¹²⁶ Paul E. Michelson, *Conflict and Crisis: Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871*, New York, Garland, 1987.

party machinery and its policies by Ion C. Brătianu and his close associates.

The taming of revolutionary liberalism and its transformation into a discourse of order started very early during the period. It can thus be discovered manifesting itself already before the ideal could be checked against the challenge of governmental responsibilities, when Brătianu reissued in the country – in 1857 – his article entitled “Nationality” – formerly published in an exile journal in 1853 – by operating relevant changes in terms of its populist rhetoric.¹²⁷ A watershed in the process was the departure of the Brătianu wing of the yet amorphous liberal party from fortyeighter social ideals over the much overdue agrarian reform introduced – in full faithfulness to the same radical ideology – by prince Cuza and his minister Mihail Kogălniceanu in 1864, at the price of a Bonapartist coup.¹²⁸ As reflected in parliamentary speeches,¹²⁹ party newspaper articles¹³⁰ and propagandistic pieces of official party history,¹³¹ the

¹²⁷ Ion C. Brătianu, “Naționalitatea” [1853], in Paul Cornea, Mihai Zamfir, coord., *Gândirea românească în epoca pașoptistă*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1969, pp. 471-494. Compare Idem, “Naționalitatea”, in *Românul* 1: 21, 1857, p. 3; 1: 24, 1857, p. 2; 1: 29, 1857, pp. 1-2; 1: 26, 1857, pp. 2-3; 1: 33, 1857, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁸ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 400-461; Apostol Stan, *Putere politică și democrație în România*, București, Albatros, 1995, pp. 16-37.

¹²⁹ Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, ed. de G. Marinescu și C. Grecescu, București, Cartea Românească, vols. 1-9, 1930-1943; *Discursurile lui Ion I. C. Brătianu*, ed. de George Fotino, București, Cartea Românească, vols. 1-3, 1933-1939; Vintilă I. C. Brătianu, *Scieri și cuvântări*, ed. de G. Marinescu și C. Grecescu, București, Imprimeriile “Independența”, vols. 1-3, 1937-1940.

¹³⁰ Relevant entries in Apostol Stan, Mircea Iosa, *Liberalismul politic în România, de la origini până la 1918*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1996; Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner et al., *Istoria Partidului Național Liberal*, București, ALL, 2000.

¹³¹ *Istoricul Partidului Național-Liberal de la 1848 și până astăzi*, București, n. p., 1923.

discourse of authoritarian modernizing liberalism came to be encapsulated in forceful pronouncements of the early interwar period, which made clear that dedication to social discipline was a heavy requirement of national growth.¹³² The clearest new addition to ideological refashioning underway came, however, from the part of a new school of economic thinking, set in the tradition of Listian protectionism and emerging in the 1870's, in order to establish itself very soon as mainstream within the party and beyond, among both academics and policy makers.¹³³ Xenopol contributed to the new wisdom by adding a touch of sociological theorizing, when arguing – in anticipation of A. Gerschenkron¹³⁴ and preparing the ground for the latter rationalizing historical views of Lovinescu – that state sponsored social change could accompany industrialization geared by governmental devices.¹³⁵

Besides strengthening its discursive consistency, oligarchic liberalism came to be deeply entrenched in social practices, most obviously by establishing, during the long liberal tenure of 1876-1888, institutional networks running from the central governmental offices to the countryside and able to keep under a tight control the electoral process (with salient counterparts established at the same time in

¹³² I. G. Duca, "Doctrina liberală", in D. Gusti et al, *Doctrinile partidelor politice*, ed. de Petre Dan, București, Garamond, [1996 (1923)], pp. 144-154.

¹³³ Radu-Dan Vlad, *Gândirea economică românească despre industrializare, 1859-1900*, București, Mica Valahie, 2001.

¹³⁴ Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: a Book of Essays*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1976 [1962].

¹³⁵ John Michael Montias, "Notes on the Romanian Debate on Sheltered Industrialization", Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, p. 60.

Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria¹³⁶). In spite of this, expressions of radical liberalism did not completely disappear from public space. As advanced over the closing decades of the XIXth century by C. A. Rosetti, Gheorghe Panu or Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea,¹³⁷ such utterances brought no innovation except a semblance of growing confusion and indetermination, and they can best be invoked for the sake of setting in a glaring contrast the mainstream doctrine. Criticisms of liberalism as the main political force were much more conspicuous at the time, and they would continue to unfold into the interwar period. Displaying a remarkable unity across ideological dividing lines, they originated from (rejuvenated) conservative sources in order to develop into the large body of social criticism whose main tenets were shared by the Right and the Left and which would come to be described, by both its practitioners and their opponents from liberal headquarters, under the label of “critical culture”. Central to it was a critical sociology of the ruling elite, depicted as increasingly dominated by a bureaucratic class with a National Liberal Party political core. Elaborated in the 1870’s by conservative authors acutely aware of their new oppositional status by reference to the formerly oppositional liberalism,¹³⁸ this idea was gradually broadened into a

¹³⁶ Andrew C. Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe, 1780-1945”, *World Politics* 41: 2, 1989, pp. 342-344.

¹³⁷ Marin Bucur, C. A. Rosetti. *Mesianism și donquijotism revoluționar*, București, Minerva, 1970; Corneliu Mateescu, *G Panu și radicalismul românesc la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1987; Barbu Delavrancea, *Crochiuri și portrete. Articole politice*, ed. de Emilia Șt. Milicescu, București, Museion, [1996].

¹³⁸ Theodor Rosetti, “Despre direcțiunea progresului nostru” [1874], in Eugen Lovinescu, coord., *Antologia ideologiei junimiste*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1942, pp. 117-162; Titu Maiorescu, “Asupra reformei legii pentru instrucțiunea publică” [1876], in

multilayered understanding of the Romanian developmental deviation from the western path of modernizing change.

6

Ideological evolution following the important *caesura* of the 1860's revolved entirely within the orbit of "critical culture", continuously expanded – and augmented in terms of its critical edge – on the basis of new intellectual additions coming from both western and Russian sources. Its right-wing segment displayed a clear orientation towards political radicalization and we shall come back to the turning points of the process below.

The left-wing compartment, otherwise, shown a marked inclination towards fragmentation, accompanied by the semblance of a chronic and irretrievable feebleness. Not unexpectedly, this syndrome was mirrored by the historical canons. While undeniable, it nevertheless led to establishing the tendency of overemphasizing the same shortcomings and of underestimating, as such, the impact of intellectual currents of the sort on the general evolution of Romanian society. As expressed in pieces of international scholarship, this interpretative wisdom makes the low profile maintained by the Left in pre-communist Romania largely accountable for the overly repressive nature of local communism and for the virtual absence of reformist and dissenting voices under the communist regime.¹³⁹ If not reconstructed historically with the force of a vindication appropriate for narrating the vagaries of a

Discursuri parlamentare, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, vol. 1, 2001 [1897, 1915], pp. 229-253.

¹³⁹ Michael Shafir, "Political Culture, Intellectual Dissent and Intellectual Consent: the Case of Romania", *Orbis* 27: 2, 1983, pp. 393-420.

chronically aggrieved minority,¹⁴⁰ the Left has been depicted as provocatively exotic or embarrassingly quixotic.¹⁴¹ What is more, the diagnostic has tended to be applied to the narrower topic of the role performed by Marxism in pre-communist Romania.¹⁴² In order to get a clearer view of the issue, one must be careful not to mistake diffusiveness for scarcity, organizational feebleness for intellectual paucity or ideological syncretism for cultural non-relevance. With Marxist socialism at its core, the Left disseminated in society a surge for democratization, performing much the same pressures to this extent as its western counterpart.¹⁴³ As for Marxism itself, one can discover it as acting – alongside its most characteristic ideological embodiments – with the status of an intellectual tool used for various ideological purposes. When the whole span of its occurrences of this type is covered, it emerges as by far the most prominent instrument thus employed at the time for making sense of the Romanian social situation.

Marxism came to Romania primarily from Russia, in the 1870's and the 1880's. In the space of the autocratic empire, the western revolutionary doctrine came to be embodied in four influential trends, of which two – Second International social-democracy and legal Marxism (the Russian counterpart of the school of

¹⁴⁰ F. Vladimir Krasnosselski, *Stânga în România, 1832-1948. Tentativă de sinucidere sau asasinat?*, n. p., Editura Victor Frunză, 1991.

¹⁴¹ Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lui tanti Varvara. Istorii clandestine*, București, Humanitas, 2005; Boia, *Capcanele istoriei*, pp. 48-94.

¹⁴² Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, pp. 37-84.

¹⁴³ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: the History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Kathedersozialismus)¹⁴⁴ – had recognizable counterparts in the West (in spite of the adjustments they had adopted in order to face meaningfully the specific challenges arising from peripheral backwardness). The other two – reformist populism and Leninism (the first and, respectively, the last of the four to emerge) – appeared, instead, as full innovations deriving from the same characteristic challenges.¹⁴⁵ Of these East European embodiments of Marxism, two succeeded to gain ground in Romania before the First World War: populism and social-democracy, with Constantin Stere¹⁴⁶ and, respectively, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea¹⁴⁷ as intellectual leaders. The other two followed in their footsteps after the war. A new tide of Russian revolutionary ideas led to a split within social-democracy in 1921, with a branch getting affiliated to the Komintern.¹⁴⁸ Operating as a small and clandestine political organization between 1924 and 1944, communism produced an intellectual figure of lasting importance in the person of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. During the 1920's, Ștefan Zeletin cast his defense of the National Liberal Party's policies in the mould of a historical sociology of Romanian modernization claiming faithfulness to the spirit of Marxism. International

¹⁴⁴ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: the Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, New York, Norton, 2005 [1978], pp. 435, 646-655.

¹⁴⁵ Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1969].

¹⁴⁶ Michael Kitch, "Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53: 131, 1975, pp. 248-271.

¹⁴⁷ Idem, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 55: 1, 1977, pp. 65-89.

¹⁴⁸ Lucien Karchmar, "Communism in Romania 1918-1921", in Ivo Banac, ed., *The Effects of World War I. The Class War after the Great War: the Rise of Communist Parties in East Central Europe, 1918-1921*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1983, pp. 127-187.

scholarship discovered him as sharing the stance of Russian legal Marxism¹⁴⁹ (of which one prominent representative, Peter Struve, had travelled a long road from social-democracy to conservative liberalism¹⁵⁰).

Neither the agrarian populism of Stere and his associates – usually treated as belonging together with the ideological family of cultural traditionalism¹⁵¹ –, nor the argumentation of Zeletin – as a general rule packed together with that of Lovinescu on account of their shared opposition to traditionalism¹⁵² – have ever found stable places under the rubric of Marxism in Romanian historical canons. This amounts to saying that the role of Marxist sociology is greatly underestimated when it comes to explaining the shaping of various intellectual structures in Romania after the 1880's. Supported also by other examples and highly relevant with respect to the history of the Left, this statement occasionally applies – as shown below – to the ideological orientations of the Right. However, it is maybe most significant when applied to liberalism itself.

Zeletin's claim to speak as both a Marxist sociologist and a defender of the modernizing liberal oligarchy rests on his accomplishment to explain local social change as driven from bottom up, by the infrastructural economic forces of

¹⁴⁹ Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brasil*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 47.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Pipes, *Struve, Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970; Idem, *Struve, Liberal on the Right, 1905-1944*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1980.

¹⁵¹ Z. Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998 [1970]; Idem, *Poporanismul*, București, Minerva, 1972.

¹⁵² Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate*; Idem, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995.

capitalism, against the prevailing view of the entire critical culture – shared by the anti-oligarchic Marxist thinking as well – that Romanian modernization was impelled by superstructural institutional factors (themselves put into motion by ideological initiatives). Relying on Rudolf Hilferding and Werner Sombart for classifying the forms and historical stages of capitalism, Zeletin identified past and present Romanian capitalism with the older, commercial and mercantilist type of capitalist economy and ascribed to the immediate future – in the course of being shaped – the financial and monopolistic type, with no room left for local ventures of free trade liberalism based on industrialism unhindered by either state control or banking cartels.¹⁵³ By doing so, he legitimated interventionist practices and mild authoritarianism both retrospectively and prospectively, giving a new twist to Romanian protectionist economic thinking. Meeting with the younger Mihail Manoilescu on the platform of defending statist “neoliberalism” – and even of searching a better engine for its development, as embodied in the People’s Party, acting as an adjunct to the National Liberal Party in the 1920’s –,¹⁵⁴ Zeletin thus handed over the interventionist wisdom to the rising corporatist theory.

In interwar Romania, the label of “neoliberalism” was used for designating the precise opposite of the anti-Keynesian and deregulating economic theory and practice that it would come to stand for in the second half of the XXth century, in the West and all throughout the

¹⁵³ Zeletin, *Burghezia română*, pp. 178-191.

¹⁵⁴ Idem, “Neoliberalismul” [1926], in *Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române*, ed. de C. D. Zeletin, București, Scripta, 1992 [1927], pp. 83-100; Mihail Manoilescu, “Neoliberalismul”, in D. Gusti et al., *Doctrinile partidelor politice*, ed. de Petre Dan, București, Garamond, [1996 (1923)], pp. 198-228.

world.¹⁵⁵ The transition from statist liberalism to corporatism underwent by Romanian economic policies and theories at the time was characteristic to virtually all the contemporary East European countries, except Czechoslovakia,¹⁵⁶ while Romania of the immediate pre-communist decades was discovered by foreign scholarship as displaying a quasi-homogenous (yet multifaceted) opposition to free trade.¹⁵⁷ It is undeniable, moreover, that the members of the economics profession in the country under communism did not contribute, alongside their counterparts in Hungary or Poland, to the rediscovery of political liberalism¹⁵⁸ or to the world-wide theoretical rejuvenation of those anti-interventionist economic views later poured into the “neoliberal consensus” that followed 1989.¹⁵⁹

It is, therefore, understandable that the entire relevant scholarship, domestic and foreign to the same extent, has failed until now to delineate and map a fourth departure in the history of Romanian liberalism. Featuring as a pathetic defense of free-trade, harshly critical of bureaucratism, protectionism and interventionism – and blaming mainstream liberalism as responsible for them –

¹⁵⁵ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew C. Janos, “The One-Party State and Social Mobilization: East Europe between the Wars”, in Samuel P. Huntington, Clement H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: the Dynamics of Established One-party Systems*, New York, Basic Books, 1970, pp. 204-236; Chirot, “Ideology, Reality and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe”.

¹⁵⁷ Angela Harre, “Conceptul de progres. Relația conflictuală dintre liberalism și intervenția statală”, in Neumann, Heinen, coord., *Istoria României prin concepte*, pp. 173-200.

¹⁵⁸ Andrzej Walicki, “Liberalism in Poland”, *Critical Review* 1: 1, 1988, pp. 8-38.

¹⁵⁹ Johanna Bockman, Gil Eyal, “Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: the Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism”, *The American Journal of Sociology* 108: 2, 2002, pp. 310-352.

this ideological stance was broadened towards embracing an equally staunch philosophical defense of individualism, accompanied by a sustained critique of (diffuse) collectivist ideas and practices, manifested in the guise of socialism, agrarianism, corporatism and “neo-medievalism”. Originally revolving around the short-lived journal *Curentul nou* – with two series issued in 1905-1906 (at Galați) and, respectively, in 1920 (at Bucharest) – this trend of thought found a new venue in the Bucharest-based journal *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală* – published between 1933 and 1940 –, enlarging its scope again in order to reject rising Romanian and European fascism, together with Soviet communism, at the price of dropping out its explicit critique of National Liberal Party policies and traditions. After reaching its climax between 1933 and the end of 1937, it survived, deeply truncated, fighting a rearguard battle, accepting dire compromises and eventually embarrassingly contradicting its original discourse, throughout the following three years marked by a descent into authoritarianism under the National Christian Party government – up to February 1938 –, then under the royal dictatorship of king Carol II – up to September 1940 – and even under the National Legionary State, to December 1940.

Besides its very neglect in the available scholarship,¹⁶⁰ this Romanian vindication of classical liberalism is remarkable for its ideological entanglements. Articulated immediately after the moment 1900 by the Jewish journalists and socialist dissenters H. Sanielevici – trained as a literary critic, founder of and director at *Curentul nou*, after publishing his first long piece of social criticism in the literary supplement of the left-wing daily newspaper *Adevărul*, in 1901 – and Ștefan Antim –

¹⁶⁰ Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate*; Idem, *Anii treizeci*.

trained as a jurist and joining Sanielevici's periodical in 1920 –, it was originally cast as a brand of social criticism indebted to the entire tradition of the “critical culture”, but continuing to make heavy recourse to Marxist sociology for explaining the Romanian social landscape, described as marked by a bureaucratic-run interventionist economy¹⁶¹ and by an agrarian economy subservient to National Liberal Party interests.¹⁶² The two contributed extensively to *Libertatea*. Headed by the economist George Strat – serving as chief-editor and emerging as the third most important voice of the school, theoretically prodigious although less explicit and elaborate in terms of social criticism¹⁶³ –, the journal got contributions from other authors who had also started their intellectual journey by a gradual disentanglement from Marxism.¹⁶⁴ It still has to be explained, however, how it came about that the publishing venture which started to shelter a pleading for liberalism in Romania precisely at the moment of the Nazi seizure in Germany, in January 1933, was sponsored by the industrialist and politician Ion Gigurtu – also serving as a director –, notorious for his involvement in the politics of royal authoritarianism and reputed as a disguised sympathizer of Iron Guard fascism¹⁶⁵ (or at least as a sometimes

¹⁶¹ H. Sanielevici, *Încercări critice*, București, Carol Göbl, 1903.

¹⁶² Ștefan Antim, *Chestiunea socială în România*, București, Imprimeria “La Roumanie”, 1908.

¹⁶³ George Strat, *Elogiul libertății*, București, Tipografia de Artă Leopold Geller, 1937.

¹⁶⁴ Anastasie Gusti, “Marx-marxismul-marxiști”, in *Scieri sociale, politice și economice*, ed. de George Strat, București, Editura Librăriei Universitare I. Cărbăș, 1940, pp. 163-190.

¹⁶⁵ Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după marea unire*, vol. 2: 1933-1940, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988, pp. 95, 338.

pragmatic and interested funder of it¹⁶⁶). Moreover, the precise scope of this ideological orientation – most eccentric by reference to the historical canons – has yet to be measured against the record of not only the Romanian,¹⁶⁷ but also the East European interwar economic ideas and policies.¹⁶⁸

Marxism helped, thus, in the creation of what could be claimed as the Romanian pedigree of the postwar liberal revival in Europe and the whole world,¹⁶⁹ followed, then, by a new surge leading to the neoliberal supremacy of the past several decades.¹⁷⁰ We could be tempted to look at the “neoliberalism” of Zeletin – elaborated as a reinforcement of existing National Liberal Party policies – as to a corresponding Romanian contribution to the development of the rival, Keynesian view, meant at containing the disruptive effects of market unpredictability by state-induced regulating designs. Such an interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that Zeletin envisioned the evolution of world society towards socialism, expected to come from the gradual economic socialization deriving inescapably – and without involving either social upheavals or the active participation of the working class – from the cartelization

¹⁶⁶ Armin Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*. *Mișcare socială și organizație politică*, trad. de Cornelia și Delia Eșianu, București, Humanitas, 1999, pp. 325.

¹⁶⁷ Ioan Saizu, *Modernizarea României contemporane. Perioada interbelică. Pas și impas*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1991.

¹⁶⁸ Love, *Crafting the Third World*; Helga Schültz, ed., *History and Culture of Economic Nationalism in East Central Europe*, Berlin, Berliner Wissenschafts Verlag, 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Fabio Masini, “Designing the Institutions of International Liberalism: Some Contributions from the Interwar Period”, *Constitutional Political Economy* 23: 1, 2012, pp. 45-65.

¹⁷⁰ Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas, Sarah L. Babb, “The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries”, *The American Journal of Sociology* 108: 3, 2002, pp. 533-579.

of industries under monopolistic capitalism.¹⁷¹ This is misleading, and the stark difference between the peripheral oligarchic liberalism supported by Zeletin and the liberal search for welfare state solutions, started in the West at the turn of the XIXth to the XXth centuries,¹⁷² emerges clearly when the first one is set in comparison with another eccentric voice of Romanian liberal advocacy. Offered by the sociologist Dumitru Drăghicescu – a disciple of Durkheim, a professed socialist at the beginning of his career¹⁷³ but also a reformist member of the National Liberal Party, eager to re-infuse it with the forgotten democratic ideals of the 1848 era¹⁷⁴ – this ideological stance repeatedly pointed to a self-definition as “liberal-socialist”,¹⁷⁵ reminiscent of the ideas exposed, at the same time, by the Italian anti-fascist militant Carlo Roselli (also a former socialist).¹⁷⁶

In the 1930's, Drăghicescu debated cordially with George Strat, in the pages of *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală*, proposing qualifications to the anti-collectivism enthusiastically embraced by the journal.¹⁷⁷ His arguments about the devastating effects of

¹⁷¹ Zeletin, “Neoliberalismul”, p. 92.

¹⁷² Michael Freeden, “The Coming of the Welfare State”, in Terence Ball, Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 7-44.

¹⁷³ Dumitru Drăghicescu, *Idealul creator. Eseu psiho-sociologic asupra evoluției sociale*, ed și trad. de Virgiliu Constantinescu-Galiceni, București, Albatros, 2005 [1914].

¹⁷⁴ Idem, *Evoluția ideilor liberale*, București, Imprimeriile “Independența”, 1921, p. 18.

¹⁷⁵ Idem, *Partide politice și clase sociale*, București, n. p., 1922, p. 84.

¹⁷⁶ Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Carlo Roselli: Socialist Heretic and Anti-fascist Exile*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999.

¹⁷⁷ Dumitru Drăghicescu, “Determinismul social și valoarea inițiativei individuale”, *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală* 1: 11, June 5, 1933, pp. 161-163; Idem, “Liberalismul și economia dirijată”, *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală*

unhindered economic individualism recall the stance later exposed by Karl Polanyi in conjunction with the New Deal agenda.¹⁷⁸ The full contours of his doctrine emerge, however, in the light of an earlier journalistic episode. Over the year 1923, Drăghicescu participated in public debates targeting the constitutional revision underway by issuing the journal *Dreptatea socială*, where he argued in favor of a broader conception of social rights and of a state able to promote redistributive policies, taking an active involvement in the relations between the capitalist and the working classes.¹⁷⁹ Zeletin contributed heavily to the same journal, with articles meant at (cynically) defending the intermingling between bourgeois interests and state power.¹⁸⁰ The two stances opposed to the minimal state conception of classical liberalism have always been conflated by historical accounts,¹⁸¹ this interpretation being fed by the undeniable fact that the constitutional document adopted in the same year did provide enlarged space for interventionist policies.¹⁸² One must be careful to distinguish them from each other. Indebted to the general reorientation of turn-of-the-

2: 13-14, July 5-20, 1934, pp. 193-194; G. Strat, "Răspuns domnului D. Drăghicescu sau despre 'pseudo-liberalismul român'", *Libertatea. Economică, politică, socială, culturală* 2: 21, November 5, 1934, pp. 325-328.

¹⁷⁸ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2001 [1944].

¹⁷⁹ Dumitru Drăghicescu, "Noțiunea proprietății și formele ei", *Dreptatea socială* 1: 3, February 15, 1923, pp. 67-72; Idem, "Dreptul de proprietate și pacea socială", *Dreptatea socială* 1: 4, March 1, 1923, pp. 106-110; "Proprietatea în întreprinderile mari. Regimul cointeresării", *Dreptatea socială* 1: 8, May 1, 1923, pp. 227-234.

¹⁸⁰ Ștefan Zeletin, "Finanța națională și politica de stat", *Dreptatea socială* 1: 7, April 5, 1923, pp. 206-219.

¹⁸¹ M. Rusenescu, I. Saizu, *Viața politică în România, 1922-1928*, București, Editura Politică, 1979, pp. 27-29; Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după marea unire*, vol. 1: 1918-1933, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986, pp. 55-70.

¹⁸² Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 97-99.

century liberalism towards social concerns¹⁸³ and revolving in the orbit of the “new liberalism” predating the economic depression and the accompanying Keynesian theorizing,¹⁸⁴ Drăghicescu’s vision – to the same extent as that of classical liberalism supported by Sanielevici, Antim and Strat – is hard to be measured against the East European contemporary record of political and economic ideas. It can be set in relation, nevertheless, with the Russian brand of new liberalism, originally articulated by Vladimir Soloviev on the basis of Christian philosophical premises – against the background of the great reforms introduced by Alexander II in the 1860’s – and reaching its climax in the thinking of Bogdan Kistiakovsky, alongside the Kadet party official ideological line.¹⁸⁵ It has to be seen, moreover, as the most significant sequel to the democratic radicalism of fortyeighter liberalism.

Having thus disclosed the contribution of Marxism to the ideological reinforcement of modernizing oligarchic liberalism, to the theoretical elaboration of free trade liberalism critical of National Liberal Party policies and to the rejuvenation of left-wing, radical liberalism of fortyeighter progeny, one can better understand the various ideological uses it was put to on the Left side of the political spectrum. Populism has to be vindicated, for sure, as the most effective intellectual trend of the kind in terms of its imprint upon political and social life. This is due, first, to the involvement of its promoters – as members or fellow-travelers of the National Liberal Party before the First World War, after revolving in the same way around the social

¹⁸³ Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society: a Historical Argument*, University Park, Penns., The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Freedon, *The New Liberalism: an Ideology of Social Reform*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978.

¹⁸⁵ Walicki, *Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism*, pp. 165-403.

democratic party affiliated to the Second International, between 1893 and 1899 – in sustained public pleading in favor of democratization through the extension of franchise and of an agrarian reform meant to consolidate the economic condition of the peasantry. Second, the “peasantist” offshoot of the same doctrine – based on a political party that was to suffer successive metamorphoses after 1919 – acted as the main oppositional force throughout the interwar period – in competition with the fascist Iron Guard after 1933 –, fighting the National Liberal Party establishment in the 1920’s and the Carolist one over the following decade – also making governments between 1928 and 1933 – and contributing most decisively to the slight, but undeniable evolution of Romanian politics towards a greater degree of pluralism (manifested by a lesser dependence of electoral outcomes on governmental control).¹⁸⁶

Hardly staying in relation to the neighboring countries as a source of liberal ideas and ideological visions of gradual improvement, autocratic Russia was by far the most important regional laboratory of political radicalism.¹⁸⁷ Before being cast in the mould of Leninism, radicalism of the socialist stripe adopted here – in the 1860’s and 1870’s – the form of revolutionary populism infused with the spirit of Blanquist terrorist conspiracy, built on Herzen’s view of an agrarian path to socialism and Chernyshevsky’s resurrection of the Enlightenment ideal in a positivistic, yet anti-liberal and anti-capitalist

¹⁸⁶ Paul A. Shapiro, “Romania’s Past as Challenge for the Future: a Developmental Approach to Interwar Politics”, in Daniel Nelson, ed., *Romania in the 1980’s*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 1981, pp. 17-67.

¹⁸⁷ Vladimir C. Nahirni, “The Russian Intelligentsia: from Men of Ideas to Men of Convictions”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4: 4, 1962, pp. 403-435.

guise.¹⁸⁸ Russian populism also enjoyed, then – in the 1870's and 1880's –, a second life as a reformist doctrine based on Marxist sociology.¹⁸⁹ East Central and South East European populism and peasantry vacillated between the two legacies¹⁹⁰ and the Romanian brand got reputed for its irretrievable tendency to brush aside peasant-oriented goals in favor of a vague vindication of public decency.¹⁹¹ In so far as it adopted a “go to the people” attitude – thus helping in igniting social tensions in the countryside leading to the peasant revolt of 1907 –, a local discourse invoking rural interests against the great landholding economy and the fiscal pressures sustaining sheltered industrialization was actually targeted at promoting interests of the upper propertied peasantry and of the small rural bourgeoisie.¹⁹² Stere's own (mainstream) populist advocacy stayed even more firmly within the reformist stance than the doctrine of his Russian inspirers, V. P. Vorontsov and N. Danielson, combing the latter's program of its socialist objectives and replacing them with the vision of an agrarian democracy.¹⁹³ Although setting the baseline for an

¹⁸⁸ Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: a History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, transl. by Francis Haskell, rev. ed., London, Phoenix Press, 2001 [1960].

¹⁸⁹ Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia: Legal Marxism and Legal Populism*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1961; Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism*.

¹⁹⁰ George D. Jackson, „Peasant Political Movements in Eastern Europe”, in Henry A. Landsberger, ed., *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change*, London, Macmillan, 1974, pp. 259-315.

¹⁹¹ Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 139-169; Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism”.

¹⁹² Philip Gabriel Eidelberg, *The Great Romanian Peasant Revolt of 1907: Origins of a Modern “Jacquerie”*, Leiden, Brill, 1974, pp. 155-189.

¹⁹³ Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism”. Compare K. J. Kottam, “Boleslaw Limanowski, a Polish Theoretician of Agrarian Socialism”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 51: 122, 1973, pp. 58-74.

evolution leading towards the rather empty rhetoric of the 1930's regarding a "peasant state" tainted with corporatist features,¹⁹⁴ the ideology of Stere bears witness for how Marxist culture supported, in Romania, the pressure for democratization under an agrarian label.

The fact that a pleading for classical liberalism emerged, in Romania, from within the fold of social democracy should not appear as paradoxical. As offered by Dobrogeanu-Gherea and a score of disciples, social criticism in the Marxist frame bears a powerful mark of eccentricity, due to its readiness to postpone indefinitely socialist revolution for the sake of taking an open involvement in the development of capitalism and in removing the neo-feudal, oligarchic and interventionist social and economic practices distorting capitalist modernization in the country. While following in this respect the main trust of Plekhanov's and generally of the Second International theory of revolution – predicated as possible and legitimate only against the background of consummate capitalist development and on the basis of genuine democratic support –, Romanian socialism went a long way towards featuring as the real local voice of (free-trade) liberalism, against the official interpretation of the doctrine, as embodied by the National Liberal Party and defended by Zeletin and Lovinescu. The Romanian historical canon has never emphasized enough this fact,¹⁹⁵ while foreign scholarship addressed it mainly in

¹⁹⁴ Ernest Ene, *Spre statul țărănesc*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1932; Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România, 1930-1940*, trad. de Adela Motoc, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2004, pp. 228-239.

¹⁹⁵ Constantin-Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul în România*, București, Editura Fundației Social-Democrate "Constantin-Titel Petrescu", 2003 [1944]; Krasnosselski, *Stânga în România*.

order to indicate socialist theoretical sophistication as a source of political ineffectiveness.¹⁹⁶

In all its embodiments, Romanian Marxist ideological advocacy – or generally left-wing discourse of Marxist inspiration – did not display the rebellious spirit and revolutionary determination characteristic to Serbian-Yugoslavian¹⁹⁷ and Bulgarian¹⁹⁸ ideological trends of the kind. Although addressing extensively issues of cultural criticism and sociology of culture,¹⁹⁹ local populists, socialists and communists did not embark upon that reinvention and rejuvenation of Marxism as a philosophical inquiry into the condition of modern alienation – leading to various cultural orientations influential later in the West – which was the main accomplishment of Polish and Hungarian Marxist thinking of the late XIXth and early XXth centuries.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 243-258.

¹⁹⁷ Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1955; Dorren Warriner, “Urban Thinkers and Peasant Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918-1959”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 38: 90, 1959, pp. 59-81.

¹⁹⁸ John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977; Nissan Oren, *Revolution Administered: Agrarianism and Communism in Bulgaria*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

¹⁹⁹ Ornea, *Poporanismul*; Idem, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, București, Cartea Românească, 1983; Michael Shafir, “Sociology of Knowledge in the Middle of Nowhere: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea”, *East European Quarterly* 19: 3, 1985, pp. 321-336. Compare Vivian Pinto, “The Civic and Aesthetic Ideals of the Bulgarian Narodnik Writers”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 32: 79, 1954, pp. 344-366; Peter Brock, “Tolstoyism and the Hungarian Peasant”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 58: 3, 1980, pp. 345-369.

²⁰⁰ Andrzej Walicki, *Stanislas Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of Western Marxism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989; Idem, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: the Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995, pp. 113-124.

Instead, their – and especially the social democrats’ – sustained effort to conceptualize semi-feudal and semi-capitalist backwardness came to focus upon the privileged topic of social stratification in the setting of delayed modernization, disclosing the bureaucratic – non-feudal and non-capitalist – ruling oligarchy as the most salient feature of the syndrome. This involved, in the case of social democracy, an alliance with the capitalist bourgeoisie against the bureaucratic class, taken against reasons of electoral expediency and popular intelligibility.²⁰¹ It was this topic which eventually marked most sharply the faultline separating communist from social-democratic social theory.²⁰² Pătrășcanu’s determination to prove the Leninist contention that a communist revolution was feasible in a country grimed by agrarian backwardness led him to elaborate a historical sociology of Romanian modernization meant to argue the similarity between national (or peripheral) and western patterns of social change. As part of the enterprise, he rejected the theory of Romanian peculiarities in terms of class structure, and especially the idea that a ruling class of bureaucratic composition stood in the way of full blown capitalist development. In doing so, the communist theorist left a heavy legacy of non-comprehensiveness to the interpretative canons prevailing in the related fields of Romanian social history and history of social thought.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Lotar Rădăceanu, “Oligarhia română. Studiu asupra istoriei capitalismului în România”, *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 5: 3-4, 1924, pp. 497-532; 6: 1-2, 1926, pp. 160-184; 6: 3-4, 1927, pp. 435-459; Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 248.

²⁰² See Chapter 4 above.

²⁰³ Henri H. Stahl, *Gânditori și curente de istorie socială românească*, ed. de Paul H. Stahl, București, Editura Universității din București, 2001; Maria Larionescu, *Istoria sociologiei românești*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2007.

There is no better starting point for engaging with the right-wing compartment of Romanian ideological development than Pătrășcanu's sociological views mentioned above. Published in 1944, his standard exposition of the Komintern explanation of fascism as an instrument deployed by decaying capitalism against growing working-class pressures²⁰⁴ set the interpretative orthodoxy in the country for the entire communist period, in spite of the fact that the author was to be purged shortly thereafter, and never fully rehabilitated. Unlike the others invoked in the article, this historical canon came to be abruptly abandoned after 1989. The search for a new overarching view has to ponder the local relevance of various theoretical and comparative models available.

Delivered as part of a series of conferences meant to delineate the identity of the "young generation" of intellectuals towards their forebears, an exchange of 1934 between the younger Mircea Vulcănescu and the older Mihail Manoilescu²⁰⁵ sheds a revealing light not primarily on the (much abused) topic of generational conflict, but on the relation between the corporatist doctrine appropriated (halfway) by Carol II as a device for strengthening his milder, but effective version of right-wing authoritarianism and the radical Right discourse gravitating around the enthusiastic, youthful, noisy and ineffective fascist revolution of the Iron Guard. Heavily underscored by a large part of international scholarship,²⁰⁶ the well marked

²⁰⁴ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi*, București, Editura Politică, 1970 [1944].

²⁰⁵ Mircea Vulcănescu, Mihail Manoilescu, *Tendințele tinerei generații. Două conferințe*, București, Tipografia Ziarului "Universul", 1934.

²⁰⁶ Janos, "The One-party State and Social Mobilization"; Chirot, "Ideology, Reality and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe"; Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*.

difference between the two ideological streams tended to be downplayed, understandably, by the historiographic tradition originated with Pătrășcanu, which preferred to present both of them as different manifestations of one single effort to oppose the process of social emancipation.²⁰⁷ It is also downplayed by comparative views presenting fascism as essentially a forward looking developmental ideology resting on the corporatist vision of accelerated growth, elaborated in the Italian semi-periphery and pirated by modernizing elites in other contexts of the kind, all of them ready to sacrifice parliamentary pluralism for the sake of national advancement but otherwise remaining faithful to Enlightenment rationality as an engine of progress.²⁰⁸ Describing the backward looking vision of German national socialism as an alteration of the original Italian model and as an exception among the various incarnations of generic fascism,²⁰⁹ this perspective also explains the Romanian anti-modern rhetoric of the Iron Guard and of its intellectual supporters as an interlude on the path leading to the final (pre-communist) victory of corporatism over its ideological competitors of the Right.²¹⁰

While making plain its close relation to Italian fascism – in order to emerge, eventually, as the most authorized voice of European corporatism at the time²¹¹ – Manoilescu's thinking also borrowed heavily – to the

²⁰⁷ Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi*; Al. Gh. Savu, *Dictatura regală (1938-1940)*, București, Editura Politică, 1970; Mușat, Ardeleanu, *România după marea unire*, vol. 2: 1933-1940.

²⁰⁸ A. James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005.

²⁰⁹ Idem, "Fascism and Modernization: Some Addenda", *World Politics* 26: 3, 1974, pp. 370-384.

²¹⁰ Idem, *Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 176-178.

²¹¹ Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?", *The Review of Politics* 36: 1, 1974, pp. 85-131; Love, *Crafting the Third World*, pp. 71-98.

same extent as the politics of Carol II, with his effort to compete with the Iron Guard on its own ground – from the Romanian culture of traditionalist nationalism. Nevertheless, it took its main inspiration from the theory and practice of local statist and oligarchic liberalism, staying in continuation to the “neoliberal” experiments of the 1920’s and emphasizing its dedication to rational institutional reordering – keenly opposed to revolutionary breaks – as a precondition for a much awaited national breakthrough.²¹² When projecting backwards into the social history of Romania his prospective vision of authoritarian modernization, Manoilescu eulogized the bourgeoisie – hailed as alien to the national body by much of traditionalist thinking – as a benefactor to the whole society (with the qualifications that it had started to act as such only after adopting the view of economic protectionism and that it could fulfill its mission only by complying to the corporatist predicament²¹³). In order to accomplish this task, he widened the conceptual understanding of the same social category, defining it – in anticipation of later international views on the topic²¹⁴ – as much more than just the bureaucratic oligarchy denounced as parasitical by the critical culture and defended by Zeletin as a modernizing requirement, on the basis of describing it as including, alongside the feeble entrepreneurial elements, the entire white collar middle class.²¹⁵

As for the revolutionary rivals of Manoilescu and Carol II, they were recently claimed as participants to a

²¹² Vulcănescu, Manoilescu, *Tendențele tinerei generații*, pp. 27-30.

²¹³ Mihail Manoilescu, *Rostul și destinul burgheziei românești*, ed. de Leonard Oprea, București, Athena, 1997 [1942], pp. 125-156, 319-340.

²¹⁴ Jürgen Kocka, “The Middle Classes in Europe”, *The Journal of Modern History* 67: 4, 1995, pp. 783-806.

²¹⁵ Manoilescu, *Rostul și destinul burgheziei românești*, pp. 395-476.

European-wide modernist political revolt against modernity, closely connected to all forms of the artistic avant-garde, sharply differentiated from the traditionalist and conservative varieties of anti-modern and anti-Enlightenment ideology and paving the way for the latter postmodernist theorizing.²¹⁶ It is undeniable that they did share, to some extent, the defining temper of such cultural trends, as well as their eagerness to reject both the values of bourgeois-liberal modernism and the settled expressions of pious traditionalism.²¹⁷ While undisputable and valid for other national forms of the radical Right in Eastern Europe,²¹⁸ this connection must certainly not be overstressed. The long-span unfolding of anti-Enlightenment culture which eventually issued into interwar fascism in various countries of Europe²¹⁹ combined ideological building-blocks of very different provenances. Of great significance among them was the transmutation of some strands of the Marxist Left into a revolutionary vision that dropped out, as obsolete, the objective of proletarian emancipation while adopting, instead, the ideal of a nationalist social renewal above class struggle.²²⁰ Strongly represented in several western

²¹⁶ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: the Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 356-358; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989, pp. 10-38.

²¹⁷ Irina Livezeanu, "After the Great Union: Generational Tensions, Intellectuals, Modernism and Ethnicity in Interwar Romania", in Lucian Boia et al., *Nation and National Ideology*, Bucharest, New Europe College, 2002, pp. 110-127.

²¹⁸ Ivan Berend, *The Crisis Zone of Europe*, transl. by Adrienne Makkay-Chambers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 37-48.

²¹⁹ Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, transl. by David Maisel, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010.

²²⁰ Idem, "The 'Anti-materialist' Revision of Marxism as an Aspect of the Rise of Fascist Ideology", *Journal of Contemporary History* 22: 3, 1987, pp. 379-400. See also H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness*

contexts, this trend of political thought – featuring revolutionary syndicalism as the most conspicuous voice – stood as one important thread running through the cultural dynamics which led from the late XIXth century feverish and polymorphous contestation of the *status quo* to the interwar revolution of the Right.²²¹ Entirely lacking in Romania, this nexus between a spiritualist interpretation of Marxism and the futurist drive to social revitalization had very scant occurrences in the surrounding countries. No matter how better endowed in this respect, due to its close link to the Austrian pre-war cultural laboratory,²²² Hungary was nevertheless much akin to Romania in so far as it produced a fascist discourse with a recognizable traditionalist and backward-looking ring, deeply rooted in the culture of the Right and emerging as the result of a series of successive departures across the spectrum of right-wing ideological orientations.²²³ Aside from these two fascist movements and ideologies – most powerful within the region and most significant in the whole of Europe outside Italy and Germany²²⁴ –, the other East European varieties of

and Society: the Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930, New York, Octagon Books, 1976 [1958], pp. 90-95, 161-192.

²²¹ Walter L. Adamson, “The Language of Opposition in Early Twentieth-century Italy: Rhetorical Continuities between Prewar Florentine Avant-gardism and Mussolini’s Fascism”, *The Journal of Modern History* 64: 1, 1992, pp. 22-51.

²²² Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York, Knopf, 1979; Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988.

²²³ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: a History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1970, pp. 1-36, 345-376.

²²⁴ Stanley G. Payne, “Fascism and Racism”, in Terence Ball, Richard Bellamy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 123-150.

radical Right were placed even closer to the different strands of the conservative establishment. Thus, in Poland, the feeble fascist contestation of the Pilsudskist mainstream political trend – itself coming in power in 1926 after a previous disentanglement from socialism in the direction of militarist nationalism²²⁵ – emerged from within the rival, “national democratic” ideological stream of Roman Dmowski. Its traditionalist orientation was fed by its indebtedness to political Catholicism.²²⁶ The same holds true, even to a greater extent, for the cases of the more contextual Croatian and Slovakian fascist parties and ideologies.²²⁷ All throughout the region, radicalism of the Right stood in stark continuity to the conservative and reactionary ideological trends articulated during the XIXth century,²²⁸ and it can best be described as emerging from a “conservative revolution”²²⁹ meant to strengthen decisively the national community by turning it back from the path of modernization,²³⁰ but also eager

²²⁵ Joseph Rothschild, *Pilsudski's Coup d'État*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966.

²²⁶ Idem, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, pp. 45-72; Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 186-190.

²²⁷ Yeshayahu Jelinek, “Clergy and Fascism: the Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustasha Movement”, in Stein Ugelvik Larsen et al., eds., *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, Bergen, Universitetsforlaget, 1980, pp. 367-378.

²²⁸ Hans Rogger, Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: a Historical Profile*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1965; Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990.

²²⁹ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: a Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1961; Werner E. Braatz, “Two Neo-Conservative Myths in Germany, 1919-1932: the ‘Third Reich’ and the ‘New State’”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32: 4, 1971, pp. 569-584.

²³⁰ Henry A. Turner, “Fascism and Modernization”, *World Politics* 24: 4, 1972, pp. 547-564.

to make use of modern technical – or “civilizational” – endowments for the same anti-modern “cultural” and ideological purposes.²³¹

The political and intellectual wings of the Romanian conservative revolution took off at precisely the same moment. Recognizable since 1922, as a movement of student unrest unfolding under a nationalist and anti-Semitic banner, “legionary” fascism got a party embodiment in 1927, emerging from within a “national-Christian” political organization functioning since 1923.²³² Also in 1927, Mircea Eliade published his series of articles asserting the need for and legitimacy of an “experimentalist” search for national authenticity²³³ against the prevailing cultural traditionalism, rooted in an Orthodox religious interpretation of national identity and revolving around the journal *Gândirea* (since 1921) and the newspaper *Cuvântul* (since 1924).²³⁴ After 1932, the two related movements came into a deep intercourse²³⁵ that was to survive – enhanced for a time by the Legion’s growth in terms of popular impact and electoral scores starting with 1933 – the violent disbandment of the fascist party by Carol II between April

²³¹ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Tehnology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

²³² Irina Livezeanu, “Fascists and Conservatives in Romania: Two Generations of Nationalists”, in Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives*, pp. 218-239.

²³³ Mircea Eliade, “Itinerariu spiritual” [1927], in *Dreptul la memorie*, ed. de Iordan Chimet, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, vol. 4, 1993, pp. 458-499; Călinescu, “The 1927 Generation in Romania”.

²³⁴ Keith Hitchins, “*Gândirea*: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise”, in Kenneth Jowitt, ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley, University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978, pp. 140-173.

²³⁵ Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului*, trad. de Marian Ștefănescu, București, Humanitas, 1995, pp. 152-182.

and November 1938 and its rebirth in martyr dressing in September 1940, in order to get dissipated after the second dismemberment of the same political organization in January 1941, as a consequence of its failed coup against general Antonescu.

Close to the tenets of European modernist culture and harboring an “existentialist” philosophical stance, discovered as a minority thread – represented by Nae Ionescu – within old-style traditionalism,²³⁶ Eliade’s claim of social revitalization nevertheless evolved towards a demand for placing national politics on solid bases of ethnic peculiarities,²³⁷ hard to distinguish from Ionescu’s own theories of the “organic state” – occasionally argued by the means of a paradoxical interpretation of the discipline of Logic, as applied to collective entities²³⁸ –, or from the related design of an “ethnocratic state”, advanced by Nichifor Crainic as a full-blown development of *Gândirist* theoretical presuppositions.²³⁹ When arguing against Manoilescu the case of social development based on peasant economic wisdom and faithful to the traditionalist vision first elaborated by Mihai Eminescu in the 1870’s,²⁴⁰ Vulcănescu was building upon his vast project of getting

²³⁶ Mircea Eliade, “Și un cuvânt al editorului”, in Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor*, ed. de Dan Zamfirescu, București, Roza Vânturilor, 1990 [1933, ed. de Mircea Eliade], pp. 421-444. A dimension somewhat overemphasized in Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation “Without Beliefs” and the Idea of Experience in Romania, 1927-1934*, Boulder, Colo., East European Monographs, 2007.

²³⁷ Idem, “Creație etnică și gândire politică” [1933], in *Meșterul Manole. Studii de etnologie și mitologie*, ed. de Magda Ursache și Petru Ursache, Cluj-Napoca, Eikon, 2007 [1992], pp. 401-403; Idem, *Textele “legionare” și despre “românism”*, ed. de Mircea Handoca, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2001.

²³⁸ George Voicu, *Mitul Nae Ionescu*, București, Ars Docendi, 2000; Nae Ionescu, *Curs de istoria logicii*, ed. de Marin Diaconu, București, Humanitas, 1993 [1941], pp. 57-79.

²³⁹ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, pp. 241-264.

²⁴⁰ Vulcănescu, Manoilescu, *Tendențele tinerei generații*.

Romanian society to the fold of “economic medievalism”, as a prerequisite for a further healthy evolution.²⁴¹ Taking very often a critical view of National Liberal Party oligarchic economic practices,²⁴² radical Right thinking nevertheless considered – also in continuation to Eminescu’s doctrine – that the protectionist turn taken by national policies of development at the end of the previous century had been an inescapable demand of the age and continued to stay as a predicament of the present.²⁴³ The basic traditionalist inspiration of Romanian intellectual fascism emerges in full light from the works of a second ranking figure like Nicolae Roșu, who presented his involvement in the revolution of the Right as the final product of a nationalist opposition against western democratic ideas, started already at the time of the 1848 revolution and unfolded inescapably through several successive stages.²⁴⁴

The year 1927 brought, thus, only the last departure marking the fractured development of traditionalist ideological pleading in Romania, itself placed in continuation to the previous evolution of the same kind underwent by political and ideological conservatism. The national-Christian political orientation, organized as a party in 1923 and augmented by the fusion with a “national-agrarian” one – of Transylvanian origins – in 1935, enjoyed a brief tenure, as a Carolist puppet, between December 1937 and

²⁴¹ Mircea Vulcănescu, “*Spre un nou medievalism economic*”. *Scieri economice*, ed. de Marin Diaconu, București, Compania, 2009.

²⁴² Idem, “Carteluri, politică liberală și dictatură economică” [1935], in “*Spre un nou medievalism economic*”, pp. 245-249.

²⁴³ Ion Veverca, *Niculae Șuțu*, București, Editura Asociației Generale a Economistilor din România, 1936, p. 130; Idem, *Naționalism economic*, București, Cartea Românească, n. d. [1941].

²⁴⁴ Nicolae Roșu, *Dialectica naționalismului*, București, Cultura Națională, [1938], p. 201.

February 1938,²⁴⁵ in order to serve as a recruiting ground for the personnel of the Antonescu regime, after January 1941.²⁴⁶ Based on a harshly exclusionary view of the ethnic nation and drawing its electoral support from socially disseminated anti-Semitism – in the same way as fascism tended to capitalize primarily on backwardness and regional disparities²⁴⁷ – it can best be characterized as a form of “extreme Right”, against the radical and revolutionary orientation of its fascist rival.²⁴⁸ Having the anti-Semitic ideologue A. C. Cuza as a leader (in partnership with Octavian Goga after 1935) it traced its origins to a party fighting under a “national democratic” label and founded in 1910 – on the basis of the collaboration between Cuza and the traditionalist historian Nicolae Iorga –, itself originated as a movement in 1906. Starting from within the frame of oppositional conservatism critical of National Liberal Party policies of modernization and of their fortyeighter (half-imagined) pedigree,²⁴⁹ Iorga evolved towards a criticism of local and European modernity much akin to that of the Hungarian

²⁴⁵ Paul A. Shapiro, “Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: the National-Christian Party in Power, December 1937-February 1938”, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 8: 1, 1974, pp. 45-88.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46; Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others*, p. 309.

²⁴⁷ Eugen Weber, “The Men of the Archangel”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 1: 1, 1966, pp. 101-126. Compare Miklós Lackó, “The Social Roots of Hungarian Fascism: the Arrow Cross”, in Stein Ugelvik Larsen et al., eds., *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, Bergen, Universitetsforlaget, 1980, pp. 395-416.

²⁴⁸ Roger Eatwell, Noël O’ Sullivan, eds., *The Nature of the Right: European and American Politics and Political Thought since 1789*, London, Pinter, 1989.

²⁴⁹ Iorga, “Partidele politice în România în secolul al XIX-lea”.

Gyula Szekfű,²⁵⁰ also maintaining an always problematic relation to the culture of anti-Semitism.²⁵¹ Although dissociating himself from Cuza in 1922²⁵² and getting estranged, gradually, from the growing political radicalism – at the cost of his assassination by the Iron Guard in 1940 –, Iorga was the most powerful voice of traditionalist nationalism between Eminescu and the 1920's and contributed most extensively to preparing the ground for the intellectual conservative revolution captured to its benefit by fascism.

Getting prominence after 1900 due to its elaboration by Iorga, Cuza and their associates,²⁵³ the traditionalist trend coming from Eminescu had emerged from within *Junimist* intellectual conservatism and stood close to the Conservative Party up to 1906. The representatives of *Gândirea* – mostly an intellectual counterpart of the national-Christian political trend – claimed continuity to it, while at the same time marking their departure from it by reference to their fundamental addition of a religious element.²⁵⁴ They did so even when adopting ideological stances hardly recognizable as genuinely traditionalist. This is, for sure, the case of the paradoxical attempt of Radu Dragnea to adjudicate a part of fortyeighter culture on the side of *Gândirism*, which drove him not only to invoking wholeheartedly standard “bourgeois” and liberal values but also to making extensive use of the categories of Marxist historical

²⁵⁰ Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary*, pp. 267-269; Irene Raab Epstein, *Gyula Szekfű: a Study in the Political Bases of Hungarian Historiography*, New York, Garland, 1987.

²⁵¹ Radu Ioanid, “Nicolae Iorga and Fascism”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 27: 3, 1992, pp. 467-492.

²⁵² Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, pp. 99-104.

²⁵³ Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*.

²⁵⁴ Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, 1998 [1936], p. 78.

sociology, filtered through a close reading of Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Zeletin.²⁵⁵ This most surprising proof that the categories of Marxist thinking could be used, at the time, to support various and competing ideological stances must certainly be placed alongside the occurrences of the same sort mentioned in the previous section of the article.

Otherwise, the role of the *Junimist* conservative cultural movement as an ideological springboard of traditionalism – and, as such, as the distant harbinger of fascism – is certainly more difficult to clarify, although it was asserted by older²⁵⁶ and recent²⁵⁷ historians in much the same fashion. Zeletin firmly placed conservatism on the side of the cultural reaction against modernity, largely on account of its criticism of the modernization process impelled by Romanian liberalism.²⁵⁸ Lovinescu closely followed him,²⁵⁹ but at the same time claimed the legacy of *Junimism* on his behalf in matters of literature and literary criticism, therefore displaying the tendency to identify in the conservative aesthetic doctrine – resting on the demand to dissociate art from militant social rhetoric, in order to protect it from demagoguery – the function of promoting rationalist opposition against political mysticism.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Dragnea, *Mihail Kogălniceanu*; Victor Rizescu, “Cum poate fi citit Kogălniceanu? Un studiu despre istorie și ideologie”, in *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, ed. a II-a, București, Pro Universitaria, 2020, pp. 307-348.

²⁵⁶ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1975; Idem, *Sămănătorismul*; Idem, *Tradiționalism și modernitate*; Idem, *Anii treizeci*.

²⁵⁷ Marta Petreu, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească*, Iași, Polirom, 2011.

²⁵⁸ Zeletin, *Bughezia română*, pp. 245-287.

²⁵⁹ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, vol. II: *Forțele reacționare*.

²⁶⁰ Idem, *T. Maiorescu și posteritatea lui critică*, București, Casa Școalelor, 1943.

In non-western contexts best epitomized by the East European periphery before the Second World War, traditionalist nationalism rests on two interconnected statements. First, an assertion of the organic community of the nation – with its cultural links resting primarily in peasant traditions – against modern individualist societal association, that can eventually evolve towards an overarching collectivist political thought, claiming the sharp primacy of national interests over individual rights;²⁶¹ second, a particularist interpretation of the historicist stance, implying the idea of the incommensurability of cultures and social forms along a progressing (or modernizing) historical trajectory.²⁶² The Romanian belated counterpart of Russian Slavophile nationalism of the 1830's and 1840's (and of the Polish national messianism featuring in the same era²⁶³), embodied in the 1920's by the cultural movement of *Gândirea*, displayed as full-blown both these defining traits of the ideological pattern in question, that were to be transmuted into subtler and more elaborated conceptions of cultural relativism by the (half-) “modernist” fellow travelers of the fascist revolution.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2: 3, 1941, pp. 257-278; Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*.

²⁶² Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: the National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, sec. ed., Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1983; Robert D'Amico, “Historicism”, in Aviezer Tucker, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2009, pp. 243-252.

²⁶³ Andrzej Walicki, *Russia, Poland and Universal Regeneration: Studies on Russian and Polish Thought of the Romantic Epoch*, Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

²⁶⁴ Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie și naționalism. Paradoxul Noica*, trad. de Emanoil Marcu, București, Humanitas, 1998; Claude Karnoouh, *Inventarea poporului-națiune*, trad. de Teodora Dumitru, Cluj-Napoca, Ideea Design & Print, 2011.

The Eminescu-Iorga brand of traditionalism vacillated over the same issues, but nevertheless considered the village as superior to the city, dubbed modernity – and not only the Romanian, distorted variety of it – as inferior to medieval arrangements, condemned western-style constitutionalism as inherently corrosive of local ways and vindicated a reinfusion of bygone archaism into the late XIXth and early XXth centuries social texture.²⁶⁵

By contrast to the three radicalizing stages of traditionalist thinking, *Junimism* was built upon a characteristic fusion between organicist conceptions of the social body – mainly of German Romantic provenance and skeptical about the implications of increasing commercialization of human relations – and the view of sociological evolutionism – taken primarily from British sources and resting of solid individualist principles.²⁶⁶ Very close, in terms of their theoretical vision, to the Polish liberal “positivists” of the 1870’s and the 1880’s²⁶⁷ – and occasionally claiming to speak as the authorized voice of liberalism in Romania²⁶⁸ – the evolutionist conservatives never wavered about their belief in gradual progress on the basis of acculturation. When measured

²⁶⁵ Dumitru Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, ed. de Oliviu Tocaciu, București, Pacifica, 1994 [1932]; Nicolae Iorga, *Originea și sensul democrației*, Vălenii de Munte, Datina Românească, [1930], pp. 50-51.

²⁶⁶ Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: a Study in Nineteenth-century Thought*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1971, pp. 41-50, 163-92; J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 68-146.

²⁶⁷ Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, pp. 205-291; Porter, “The Social Nation and Its Futures”.

²⁶⁸ Titu Maiorescu, “Pentru restabilirea școlilor normale” [1872], in *Discursuri parlamentare*, ed. de Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, vol. 1, 2001 [1897, 1915], p. 90.

with the help of the “rationalist-nationalist” axis,²⁶⁹ their philosophy – originated with an article by Titu Maiorescu of 1868²⁷⁰ and best encapsulated in a book by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru of 1904²⁷¹ – emerges as very close to the first position. Equally opposed to the “oriental barbarism” of traditional society and to the distorted modernization that had come to replace it in Romania, they pleaded for a reinfusion of authenticity in all spheres of national life, while always refraining from pointing to nativist values as incongruent with western ways. Even when discovering, in the 1930’s, the Soviet, Italian and German-type reorganizing of society on the totalitarian pattern as an inescapable horizon of worldwide modernization, Rădulescu-Motru staunchly rejected religious-based traditionalism as a valid political recipe of the age²⁷² (and in spite of the fact that he had previously abandoned Maiorescu’s autonomist conception of art for the opposite, militant one, that unavoidably involved some degree of traditionalist overtones when advocating literary creations targeting the peasant social landscape²⁷³). At the same time, however, his readiness to drop out individualism in favor of a fully fledged communitarian view, divorcing the idea of nationalism

²⁶⁹ Shapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-century Political Thought*.

²⁷⁰ Titu Maiorescu, “În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română” [1868], in *Critice*, ed. de Domnica Filimon, București, Elion, 2000 [1908], pp. 161-170.

²⁷¹ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, “Cultura română și politicianismul” [1904], in *Personalismul energetic și alte scrieri*, ed. de Gh. Al. Cazan și Gheorghe Pienescu, București, Editura Eminescu, 1984. pp. 1-104.

²⁷² Idem, *Românismul*, ed. de Marin Aiftincă, București, Garamond, 1996 [1936, 1939], pp. 46-47, 93-99.

²⁷³ Idem, “Idealurile sociale și arta” [1900], in *Personalismul energetic și alte scrieri*, ed. de Gh. Al. Cazan și Gheorghe Pienescu, București, Editura Eminescu, 1984. pp. 743-753.

from its XIXth century, Wilsonian-style cohabitation with liberalism,²⁷⁴ was predicated on a long-standing theoretical inconsistency of the school in this respect, already manifest in utterances of the 1880's.²⁷⁵

Classical Russian westernizers of the first half of the XIXth century made their anti-Slavophile case by drawing on the Hegelian conception of a linear universal history culminating in European modernity.²⁷⁶ By doing so, they could not disentangle themselves entirely from the statist and collectivist implications of the Hegelian political philosophy. At the turn of the XIXth to the XXth centuries, the German dichotomous sociology of modernization resting on the comparison between the organic traditional community and the contractualist modern society – and drawing on Herderian Romantic sources – could easily slip into a celebration of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ready to be used by the conservative revolution of the 1920's.²⁷⁷ Romanian evolutionist conservatives liked to pack Herder, Hegel and even Marx together in order to plead the wisdom of the “historicist” view – attentive to the demands of gradualist social evolution – against the “rationalist” drive to mechanical modernization which they blamed on the liberal political trend.²⁷⁸ When rejecting the reactionary implications of

²⁷⁴ Idem, *Românismul*, pp. 43-45.

²⁷⁵ Rosetti, “Mișcarea socială la noi”.

²⁷⁶ Siljak, “Between East and West: Hegel and the Origins of the Russian Dilemma”.

²⁷⁷ Arthur Mitzman, “Tönnies and German Society, 1887-1914: from Cultural Pessimism to the Celebration of the *Volksgemeinschaft*”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32: 4, 1971, pp. 507-524. Compare Reinhard Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9: 3, 1967, pp. 292-346.

²⁷⁸ Alexandru Papacostea, “Tradiționalism și raționalism” [1924], in *România politică. Doctrină, idei, figuri, 1907-1925*, ed. de Ștefan Zeletin, București, Tipografia “Bucovina” I. E. Torouțiu, [1932], pp.287-303.

the Romantic historical sociology and their manifestations in the local cultural context, Zeletin himself vindicated the veracity of the Marxist outgrowth of the same European current of thought, criticizing the conservatives and their followers as false interpreters of the basic historicist statements.²⁷⁹ Writing towards the end of the pre-communist period, a disciple of Lovinescu – who occasionally pointed to state-induced change as a necessary correction to social inertia²⁸⁰ – compared the “rationalist” and the “historical” conceptions on equal footing,²⁸¹ also discovering that the Hegelian view had been used as a legitimating device, throughout the successive stages of Romanian modernization, by the promoters of rapid change and by the spokesmen of gradualism and tradition alike.²⁸² It can be argued that, much in the same fashion as Russian Hegelianism and the German XIXth century characteristic interpretation of sociological evolutionism, the Romanian vision of “organic change” was a slippery rhetoric that could nourish the dynamic of indigenist nationalism and radical politics.

Junimism stood not only as the fountainhead of local traditionalism, but also as the third stage in the development of Romanian conservatism. Its oppositional self-identity, adopted already in the 1860’s, squared well with a stubborn cosmopolitan stance, which implied a wholesale critique of surrounding realities by relying exclusively on western (evolutionist, organicist and historicist) social science. By so doing – and no matter

²⁷⁹ Zeletin, “Romantismul german și cultura critică română”, p. 69.

²⁸⁰ Tudor Vianu, “Statul ca îndreptar” [1924], in *Dreptul la memorie*, ed. de Iordan Chimet, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, vol. 4, 1993, pp. 176-191.

²⁸¹ Idem, *Raționalism și istorism (studiu de filozofia culturii)*, București, Tiparul Universitar, 1938.

²⁸² Idem, *Înfluența lui Hegel în cultura română*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1933.

their landholding fortunes, parliamentary representation and governmental tenures – the “new conservatives” took over the social role performed by the spokesmen of fortyeighter liberalism over the preceding decades. Accepting the regime of civil equality introduced in 1858 as a consummated fact and decrying the lot of the peasantry under the burden of fiscal pressures increasingly subservient to bureaucratic interests,²⁸³ they stood at the origins of the entire “critical culture” and of its various modes of social criticism, that were to be put to work for left-wing and right-wing purposes to the same extent.

A certain continuity of conservative politics – on the platform of defending boyar economic and social interests – across the threshold of the 1860’s is undeniable, and it was rightly perceived as such by late XIXth and early XXth century historical accounts with a liberal²⁸⁴ or a populist²⁸⁵ bent, as well as by social critics of nationalist²⁸⁶ and socialist²⁸⁷ stripes. Still, one can discern no less significant differences between the political orientation advancing an unclear demand for social and institutional gradualism on the basis of *Junimist* evolutionist rhetoric and the open defense of privileges exhibited by Barbu Catargiu and his associates in 1848 and over the subsequent years.²⁸⁸ The *protipendada*-serving discourse articulated in the second half of the XVIIIth century – and exhibiting in 1770 and

²⁸³ Maiorescu, “Asupra reformei legii pentru instrucțiunea publică”.

²⁸⁴ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*.

²⁸⁵ Radu Rosetti, *Pentru ce s-au răsculat țărani?*, ed. de Z. Ornea, București, Editura Eminescu, 1987 [1908]; Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească*.

²⁸⁶ A. C. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente*, Iași, n. p., 1895.

²⁸⁷ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Neoioabăgia” [1910], in *Opere complete*, ed. de Ion Popescu-Puțuri et al., București, Editura Politică, vol. 4, 1978.

²⁸⁸ Stahl, *Gânditori și curente*, pp. 104-110.

1782 vocal anti-Phanariot statements delivered from the standpoint of the upper boyardom of both Principalities²⁸⁹ – was marked, in the 1820's, by a transformation closely resembling the departure of fortyeighther liberalism from the *căruunari* ideology. A new political vocabulary – featuring for the first time in a letter dispatched in 1823 by the future Moldavian prince Mihail Sturdza to a Russian diplomatic representative²⁹⁰ – was acquired in close association with a growing consciousness of the western cultural connection. A timid political rhetoric pointing to the wisdom of organic change and taking inspiration from contemporary European discourses of the Right was put forward accordingly,²⁹¹ in conjunction with a new legitimating historical account scrutinizing the depths of the medieval past in order to argue – against the populist history advanced by Bălcescu – the primacy of boyar property rights and of feudal arrangements over peasant smallholding tenure.²⁹² A belated indigenization of the Phanariot reformist discourse stood as something of a buffer between the two contending ideological camps.²⁹³

Unlike the Russian and the (much less prominent) Polish trends of the sort, early Romanian conservatism

²⁸⁹ Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea stărilor*, pp. 193-202; Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*, p. 95.

²⁹⁰ Anastasie Iordache, *Originile și constituirea Partidului Conservator din România*, București, Paideia, 1999, pp. 50-52.

²⁹¹ Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice*, pp. 260-262; Iordache, *Originile și constituirea Partidului Conservator*, pp. 93-126.

²⁹² Stahl, *Gânditori și curente*, loc. cit.

²⁹³ *Memoriile principelui Nicolae Șuțu*, ed. și trad. de Georgeta Penelea Filitti, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1997 [1899]; Andrei Pippidi, "Nicolas Soutzo (1798-1871) et la fin du régime phanariote dans les Principautés roumaines", in *Hommes et idées du Sud-Est européen à l'aube de l'âge moderne*, Bucarest-Paris, Académie Roumaine-Éditions du C. N. R. S., 1980, pp. 315-338.

defending the establishment did not have to struggle on two fronts, by fighting at the same time liberal challenges and Romantic retrogressive (and right-wing) utopias with a populist ring.²⁹⁴ It shared the predicament of its Hungarian counterpart in this respect, less the latter's low-level flirtation with precisely such Romantic ideas, against the liberal westernizer drive.²⁹⁵ A political orientation with a conservative label existed for only several years after the liberation of 1878, by opposition to the liberal trend, in the quasi-homogenous peasant society of XIXth century Bulgaria.²⁹⁶ It is of greater significance, however, that neighboring Serbia – which went out of the Ottoman Empire with the same social structure – got endowed at an earlier moment with a political family of the kind from scratch, in the shape of an (informal) oligarchic “constitutionalist” party, created in the 1830's in order to oppose the original naked arbitrariness of princely rule and dissolved in the 1850's under the combined attacks of western-inspired liberalism and Slavophile nationalism with a strong Russian connection.²⁹⁷ It is undeniable, otherwise, that a heavier recourse to regional comparisons can lead to disclosing multiple meanings of ideological developments in the countries of Eastern Europe before the Second World War. The present paper relied on such accumulated comparative wisdom in order to identify – or better circumscribe, against the mainstream or recently established interpretations – four departures in the

²⁹⁴ Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics*; Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*.

²⁹⁵ Dénes, “The Value Systems of Liberals and Conservatives in Hungary”.

²⁹⁶ Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878-1918*, pp. 27-72; Cyril E. Black, “The Influence of Western Political Thought in Bulgaria, 1850-1885”, *The American Historical Review* 48: 3, 1943, pp. 507-520.

²⁹⁷ Stoianovich, “The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution”, pp. 244-248.

evolution of liberalism (one of them issuing into the muddled compound of corporatism), three forms of left-wing discourse, six varieties of conservative and traditionalist political thought and seven different ideological uses of Marxist sociology in relation to Romanian social realities of the period.

Addenda
Again about Nationalism
and the Peripheral Predicament

8. Multiculturalism as Collective Memory: Reflections around the Treaty of Trianon

When pondering – three years before the second arbitration of Vienna – the chances of discovering a peaceful solution for the territorial disputes on ethnic-national grounds then prevailing in the region of Eastern Europe, in the last pages of his book bearing the title – blatantly provocative, if not altogether scandalous when seen from a Romanian perspective – *Hungary and Her Successors: the Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences*, the British historian C. A. Macartney draws to an end his investigation by a statement that seems likely to be highlighted in a black book of revisionist propaganda leveled against the arrangements of the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Settlement: “I think it can fairly be said of Hungary what [František] Palácky said of Austria in 1848: that if she did not exist it would be necessary to invent her”.¹ This issues from an argumentation pointing to the desirable character of “Helvetization” as a general design for administering the specific multicultural predicament of the area, which however underscores the fact that the historical borders of the Hungarian state – dismantled seventeen years beforehand, after being revived in 1867 through the refashioning of the Habsburg Monarchy in the format of Dualism – exhibit an undeniable significance on account of various criteria, and therefore should be somehow taken as a reference of the enterprise

Previous version in Romanian in *Polis. Revistă de științe politice* 7: 2 (n. s.), 2019, pp. 145-159. Present translation by the author.

¹ C. A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: the Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences*, London, Oxford University Press, 1937, pp. 496.

of geopolitical reconfiguration envisioned (otherwise not very strenuously, and with visible skepticism).

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The intervention invoked certainly proves to be less outrageous than a regular Romanian reader could be tempted to think at first glance, once it is related to the entire approach deployed by the western expert, across several decades, with a view to giving a sound assessment and an appropriate resolution to the entire question in debate. We can indeed find him in 1942 – shortly after the unfortunate arbitration in favor of Hungary mentioned above and operated by the great fascist powers –, meditating about the “problems of the Danube basin” against the background of the recent victories and conquests of Hitler and stating – in agreement with other works of the period coming from the same milieu² – that the inconclusive balance sheet of the policies regarding the national minorities practiced by the governments of the small East European countries had to be disclosed as creating propitious conditions for the easy German penetration into the area.³ Twenty years later – and in the context of the Cold War –, the same author was to renew his diagnostic when looking backwards to the “independent Eastern Europe” of the interwar decades⁴ (thus treating the region, together with his collaborator, as a “land between” the German and the Russian giants⁵). Already in 1934, when drawing the

² Paul Einzig, *Bloodless Invasion: German Economic Penetration into the Danubian States and the Balkans*, London, Duckworth, 1938.

³ C. A. Macartney, *Problems of the Danube Basin*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1942, pp. 120-143.

⁴ C. A. Macartney, A. W. Palmer, *Independent Eastern Europe: a History*, London, Macmillan, 1966 [1962], pp. 97-146.

⁵ A. W. Palmer, *The Lands between: a History of East-Central Europe since the Congress of Vienna*, New York, Macmillan, 1970.

anatomy of the dominant theories concerning the relation between “national states and national minorities” and of the practices developed on their bases under the cover of the League of Nations, he had described the antecedents and the consequences of the act adopted at Trianon in 1920 by saying that “it was [...] reserved to Hungary to become the scene of the first really violent minorities struggle, just as it was in the same territory that many of the most difficult minority problems presented themselves in the twentieth century”.⁶ But this only in order for him to come back to the topic three years later, in the book about Trianon cited above – and in advance of formulating the conclusion delineated –, such as to depict in dark colors the shortcomings of the Hungarian policies towards minorities of the period 1867-1918,⁷ moving then to examining the measures adopted by the Romanian state in Transylvania after 1918 and presenting them as constituting an inversion of the earlier Hungarian trials, nevertheless revolving within the horizon of the same generic deficiencies.⁸ The realities involved are described with ironic bitterness as follows: “In 1914 Transylvania was ruled by and for the Magyars, without and largely against the Romanians, with the Saxons occupying a sort of middle position. Today, it is ruled by and for the Romanians, against the Magyars, with the Germans still in the middle – culturally better off, socially and economically worse off”.⁹

The best testimony for the spirit of objectivity presiding over the pursuits of Macartney is, however, the way he relates in the last book indicated to the activity of

⁶ C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, London, Oxford University Press, 1934, p. 113.

⁷ Idem, *Hungary and Her Successors*, pp. 20-26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-355.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

R. W. Seton-Watson, his colleague and predecessor in the field of East European studies focused on the problem of nationalities, a founder – in 1915 – of the School of Slavonic Studies (later School of Slavonic and East European Studies) and – in 1922 – of the periodical *The Slavonic Review* (later *The Slavonic and East European Review*), moreover retained by posterity as an active participant in the elaboration of the western vision about the territorial succession of Austria-Hungary at the time of the war of 1914-1918 and of the peace treaties following it¹⁰ (most conspicuously by the means of his journal *The New Europe*, published from 1916 to 1920). Celebrated by the South-Slavs¹¹ and the Romanians¹² alike as an advocate of the respective national causes and most often perceived as an ambivalent thinker from a Hungarian standpoint¹³ – nevertheless displaying views adopted and widely disseminated by later works with ambitious objectives of global comparative study¹⁴ –, the figure in question is acknowledged by Macartney, in

¹⁰ Hugh Seton-Watson, Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe. R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Days of Austria-Hungary*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1981.

¹¹ Hugh Seton-Watson et al., eds., *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs. Correspondence 1906-1941*, London and Zagreb, British Academy and University of Zagreb/Institute of Croatian History, vols. 1-2, 1976.

¹² Cornelia Bodea, Hugh Seton-Watson, coord., *R. W. Seton-Watson și românii, 1906-1920*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, vols. 1-2, 1988.

¹³ László Péter, “R. W. Seton-Watson’s Changing Views on the National Question of the Habsburg Monarchy and the European Balance of Power”, in *Hungary’s Long Nineteenth Century. Constitutional and Democratic Traditions in a European Perspective*, ed. by Miklós Lojkó, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 438-465.

¹⁴ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: an Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London, Methuen, 1977, pp. 143-191; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, sec. ed., London, Verso, 1991, pp. 81-111.

1937, as the supreme authoritative voice regarding the story of the attempt put forward by the Hungarian state to absorb a population of seven million non-Magyars into the vortex of a national culture having at its core the six million representatives of the dominant national group.¹⁵

There is quoted as part of this recognition, for sure, the most influential work devoted by Seton-Watson to the topic, published in 1908, dealing with the “racial problems in Hungary” and describing the deep contradictions created between the provisions of the 1868 “law of nationalities” – adopted under the influence of the politicians Ferenc Deák and József Eötvös – and the actual evolution of the politics in the field promoted by the Budapest governments – most conspicuously articulated by the Liberal Party founded in 1875 and dominated in turn by Kálmán Tisza and István Tisza¹⁶ –, in order to formulate the conclusion that “in matters of education, administration and justice, of association and assembly, of the franchise and the press, the non-Magyar nationalities are the victims of a policy of repression which is without any parallel in civilized Europe”.¹⁷ References are given, in the same fashion, to the next major intervention pertaining to the same virulent critique, focused on the diffuse corruption affecting the electoral process within the eastern component of the Dualist monarchy¹⁸ and describing patterns of oligarchic politics whose interwar survivals – prevailing within the post-Trianon truncated Hungary – would be surveyed by

¹⁵ Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors*, p. 23.

¹⁶ R. W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, London, Archibald Constable & Co, LTD, 1908, pp. 161-204.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁸ Idem, *Corruption and Reform in Hungary: a Study of Electoral Practice*, London, Constable & Co, LTD, 1911.

Macartney himself in a masterful and famous work,¹⁹ only to be given later on a more precise diagnostic by other authors and in the language of the comparative historical sociology of modernization.²⁰

The decisive proof for the fundamental agreement between the two British authorities – however hidden to many of their readers by a score of undeniably different accents they employ – is given by the way Macartney integrates among his references the 1934 booklet where Seton-Watson surveys the international debate underway about the “treaty revision”, placing at the center of his investigations the contemporary demands for redrawing the “Hungarian frontiers”. After underscoring the fact that the Dualist monarchy had not fallen as a result of foreign subversion, but under the impact of political movements articulated within its confines²¹ – in order to counteract, in connection to this, the “myth of the incompetent experts”²² circulated in the propaganda literature of the moment²³ –, the former editor of *The New Europe* takes issue with the prospects of pacification in the area, thus drawing the conclusion that “the ultimate aim – reconciliation between the rival races of the

¹⁹ C. A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: a History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, vols. 1-2, 1956-1957.

²⁰ Andrew C. Janos, “The Decline of Oligarchy: Bureaucratic and Mass Politics in the Age of Dualism”, in Andrew C. Janos, William B. Slottman, eds., *Revolution in Perspective: Essays on the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1971, pp. 1-61; Idem, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982.

²¹ R. W. Seton-Watson, *Treaty Revision and the Hungarian Frontiers*, [London], Eyre and Spottiswoode Publishers, LTD, 1934, pp. 18-21.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

²³ Albert Apponyi et al., *Justice for Hungary: Review and Criticism of the Effects of the Treaty of Trianon*, London, Longmans, 1928.

Danube area – can only be attained by reducing as far as possible the importance of frontiers, whether political or economic, and by perfecting the machinery for safeguarding the rights of minorities”.²⁴ It is hard not to identify here a way of thinking that resonates with the reluctant pleading for Helvetization that was to be advanced just several years afterwards by his comrade with the reputation of a subtle revisionist.²⁵

It must be said, though, that Macartney goes farther than the great critic of the politics of István Tisza with respect to the positive retrospective evaluation of the 1868 law of nationalities, and more precisely up to asserting – without raising doubts about the disparities created in its aftermath between principles and realities – that “the League of Nations Minority Treaties, which have drawn very largely upon it for inspiration, fall far short of it in generosity”.²⁶ In fact, he only subscribes here to the judgments advanced shortly beforehand, in his book about “the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy”, by Oscar Jászi, former minister of nationalities in the social-democratic cabinet led by Mihály Károlyi and functioning over the period March 1918 - January 1919 (published in exile and in continuation to another work – this one benefiting from an introduction by Seton-Watson – which gives account of the successive dislocations affecting the Hungarian society all throughout the transition from the regime of Dualism to that of the admiral Miklós Horthy, through the intermediate stages of the left-wing revolutions²⁷). Indeed, one can see how, while describing in his turn the forms without substance shaped against

²⁴ Seton-Watson, *Treaty Revision and the Hungarian Frontiers*, p. 69.

²⁵ Miklós Lojkó, “C. A. Macartney and Central Europe”, *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 6: 1, 1999, pp. 37-57.

²⁶ Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors*, p. 21.

²⁷ Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary*, transl. by E. W. Dickes, London, P. S. King & Son, LTD, 1924.

the background of the liberal profession of faith harbored by Eötvös and Deák,²⁸ the socialist runaway dwells upon the enlightened compromise established within the text of the law between the federalist demands of the minorities and the reactionary chauvinism displayed by various Magyar political factions, itself grounded on the idea of equality among the individual members of all nationalities conjoined with a corresponding rejection of the design of having the national groups concerned given representation as corporative structures, moreover targeted at “loyalizing” the minorities towards the Hungarian state without any pressures aimed at their Magyarization and taking a leaf from the “inclusionary” implications of the notion of “Hungarian nation”²⁹ (forged in the Middle Ages as yet another name of the noble political class and infused with new meanings by the liberals of the early XIXth century, dedicated as they were to the vision of entrenching the regime of civil equality by the gradual extension of noble privileges into the – highly multinational – mass of the underprivileged³⁰). Staying close to the multiculturalist project of the Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer³¹ – based,

²⁸ Idem, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1929, pp. 317-343.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 314-317.

³⁰ Iván Zoltán Dénes, “The Value Systems of Liberals and Conservatives in Hungary, 1830-1848”, *The Historical Journal* 36: 4, 1993, pp. 825-850.

³¹ Karl Renner, “State and Nation: a Constitutional Investigation of the Possible Principles of a Solution and the Juridical Prerequisites for a Law of Nationalities”, in Mark E. Blum, William Smaldone, eds., *Austro-Marxism: the Ideology of Unity*, vol. 1: *Austro-Marxist Theory and Strategy*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 369-403; Otto Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, transl. by Joseph O’Donnell, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000; A. G. Kogan, “The Social Democrats and the Conflict of Nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy”, *Journal of Modern History* 21: 3, 1949, pp. 204-217.

according to his summary, on the conception of giving representation to the peoples of the monarchy by treating them as “collective personalities” or “national universities”³² – Jászi compares unfavorably the situation in Hungary with the federalist policies practiced in the Austrian half of the empire,³³ in order to draw from this – as far as the plans for the future are concerned – a recipe very similar to those recommended by Seton-Watson and Macartney³⁴ (recipe which Jászi had already experimented, actually, in 1918, when striving to save the Hungarian state by the means of its multinational restructuring, and which Macartney meaningfully appropriates as a reference of his own pleading³⁵).

2

Trying to elucidate in a generalizing and classificatory manner the twists and turns of the failed Hungarian strategy of nation building deployed over the period predating the moment 1918, Macartney says in 1934 that “the position of the Magyars was [...] nearer to that of the French than the Germans. They took as their starting-point the state, within its historic frontiers [...], but they thought it impossible to safeguard their state rights without ensuring the supremacy of the Magyar nation. Thus, when they set about the assimilation of the minorities, [...] they did so in the name, not of the rights of nationality, but of the state”.³⁶ The statement has to be placed in a context marked by the diversification of international thinking about the paradigmatic difference between the French and the German approaches to shaping the nation and

³² Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 178-179.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 344-365.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

³⁵ Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors*, pp. 22-23.

³⁶ Idem, *National States and National Minorities*, p. 118.

elaborating the national state, featuring during the period in various formulations³⁷ – ever more often within the English-speaking cultural and academic world³⁸ –, however all of them placed in continuation to the founding pronouncements given by Ernest Renan and Friedrich Meinecke in 1882,³⁹ respectively 1907.⁴⁰ A British collective work published in 1939 under the aegis of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, under the editorship of the left-wing historian E. H. Carr – also well known for his individual contributions in the field of nationalism studies⁴¹ – and sent to print before the outbreak of the Second World War dwells itself on the famous comparison between the model of the state which forges the nation (embodied by the British and the French cases) and that of the nation which creates the state (represented by the German world).⁴²

The East European space is not approached here, however, in the light of a consistent attempt of employing the same dichotomy with the function of a heuristic instrument with universal applicability. After treating Russia under a separate heading,⁴³ the book in question – otherwise indicated in the specialized bibliographical

³⁷ Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory*, London, Routledge, 2014 [2005], pp. 59-106.

³⁸ Ramsey Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism: the Culmination of Modern History*, London, Constable & Company LTD, 1916; Israel Zangwill, *The Principle of Nationalities*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1917.

³⁹ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" [1882], transl. by Martin Thom, in Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 8-22.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, transl. by Robert B. Kimber, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970.

⁴¹ E. H. Carr, *Nationalism and after*, London, Macmillan, 1945.

⁴² *Nationalism: a Report by a Study Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, London, Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 35-56.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-80.

surveys as a milestone of the domain of studies involved⁴⁴ – discovers the evolution along the path of the national state taken by the smaller peoples of the intermediate area as marked in a defining fashion by the fight for liberation from under foreign imperial rule and therefore constituting a peculiar variety of nationalist political experience.⁴⁵ The binary typology of the existing conceptions about the nation advanced at the end of the work does itself not embark upon an enterprise of broadening the French-German dissociations that had emerged in the footsteps of the war of 1870, instead indulging in a theorizing about the fundamental difference that can be drawn between the national movements animated by legitimate ideals of collective self-determination and those sustained by the closely interconnected aims of chauvinistic expansionism and xenophobic homogenization⁴⁶ (at a time when the skepticism voiced by Lord Acton with respect to the idea of the benefic – or at least benign – character of the conception of self-determination in debate⁴⁷ – itself given theoretical foundations by John Stuart Mill in the era of the Italian unification⁴⁸ before being taken over by president Wilson and advanced as a guiding principle of world reconstruction after the Great War – was suffering a comeback, no matter how partial and reluctant⁴⁹). The other pioneering works of the time concerned with the

⁴⁴ Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory*, pp. 95-98.

⁴⁵ *Nationalism: a Report by a Study Group*, pp. 81-113.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-332.

⁴⁷ Lord Acton, "Nationality" [1862], in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, Verso, 1996, pp. 17-38.

⁴⁸ John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government" [1861], in *Utilitarianism. On Liberty. Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. by Geraint Williams, London, Dent, 1996, pp. 391-398.

⁴⁹ Alfred Zimmern, *Nationality and Government: with Other Wartime Essays*, London, Robert M. McBride, 1918.

comparative study of national movements and ideologies likewise do not engage in considerations of the sort indicated.⁵⁰ It was only the 1944 book about “the idea of nationalism” by the American historian of Czech origin Hans Kohn which took such a step along the line of generalizing statements, accurately distinguishing between the nationalism of the western – or else “civic”, French-style – variety and that of the “eastern” – “ethnic” and German – progeny,⁵¹ and inaugurating a wide welter of approaches meant at drawing classifications and establishing hierarchies on the basis of the refurbished dichotomy (thus placing on opposite sides of the dividing lines the “voluntarist” and, respectively, the “organic” conceptions of the nation,⁵² ascertaining the “liberal” features exhibited by some of them by departure from the “illiberal” nature of the others⁵³ or simply identifying the characteristics of the “good” nationalism by comparison to those of the “bad” one⁵⁴).

Almost three decades have passed since the relevance of the distinction overused and so often abused was forcefully reasserted in connection with the acceleration of the process of European integration that followed the moment 1989, with the French-German core of the civic-ethnic spectrum being reinstated at the forefront of

⁵⁰ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, New York, Macmillan, 1931.

⁵¹ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background*, New York, Macmillan, 1961 [1944]. An early restatement in Lewis B. Namier, “Nationality and Liberty” [1948], in *Vanished Supremacies: Essays on European History, 1812-1918*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963 [1958], pp. 31-53.

⁵² Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, pp. 24-31.

⁵³ Ray Taras, *Liberal and Illiberal Nationalisms*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

⁵⁴ Philip Spencer, Howard Wollman, *Nationalism: a Critical Introduction*, London, Sage Publications, 2002, pp. 94-120.

comparative proceedings in the field, always with a view to the idea that the disjunction between the “assimilationist” and the “differentialist” conceptions of national belonging can only remain a vital benchmark of the continuing efforts of redefining the citizenship bodies, on the layer of legislative and administrative engineering and on that of philosophical evaluation alike.⁵⁵ While a series of later relevant interventions did subscribe to the same pleading,⁵⁶ they nevertheless had to confront many others inclined to present the civic model as a myth with only inconclusive approximations in the real world⁵⁷ or to argue that civic and ethnic solidarities can be found coexisting in one and the same national space,⁵⁸ that spaces dominated by one of the two ways of defining the allegiance to a community can be affected by transformations leading ultimately to the predominance of the opposite model,⁵⁹ or else that the two

⁵⁵ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁶ Tim Reesens, Marc Hooghe, “Beyond the Civic-Ethnic Dichotomy: Investigating the Structure of Citizenship Concepts across Thirty-three Countries”, *Nations and Nationalism* 16: 4, 2010, pp. 579-597; Gal Ariely, “Nationhood across Europe: the Civic-Ethnic Framework and the Distinction between Western and Eastern Europe”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 14: 1, 2013, pp. 123-143.

⁵⁷ Bernard Yack, “The Myth of the Civic Nation”, in Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York, The State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 103-118; Taras Kuzio, “The Myth of the Civic State: a Critical Survey of Hans Kohn’s Framework for Understanding Nationalism”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21: 1, 2002, pp. 20-39.

⁵⁸ Stephen Shulman, “Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism”, *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 5, 2002, pp. 554-585; Fredrika Björklund, “The East European ‘Ethnic Nation’: Myth or Reality?”, *European Journal of Political Research* 45: 1, 2006, pp. 93-121; John Coakley, “National Identity and the ‘Kohn Dichotomy’”, *Nationalities Papers* 46: 2, 2018, pp. 252-271.

⁵⁹ Marina Germane, “Civic or Ethnic Nationalism? Two Competing Concepts in Interwar Latvia”, *Nations and Nationalism* 18: 3, 2012, pp.

sets of principles are actually correlated dynamically and inextricably in all the relevant contexts.⁶⁰ Also from within this painstaking morphology of the ways the relations between individuals, national communities and political structures are articulated there can be disentangled the idea that the proper administration of cultural differences requires the elaboration of syntheses – themselves with changing topographies according to the circumstances of each context – between the patterns analytically circumscribed by reference to the French case and those recorded in view of the German experience.⁶¹

Macartney's hesitations regarding the characterization of the national policies employed by the Hungarian state in terms of the comparison between the French and the German paradigms looked very embarrassing, for sure, over the period when Kohn's theses about the participation of all East-European nationalisms to the latter model – sometimes slightly revised in order to match the requirements of a more comprehensive taxonomy⁶² – were accepted without any serious qualification. This does not prevent them from appearing to us in a new light, nowadays, once the centuries-old ethnic-differentialist antecedents of the processes of nation building in the

439-430; George Mavrommatis, "Greek Citizenship in Flux? Investigating Contemporary Tensions between Ethnic and Civic Elements of Nationality", *Nationalities Papers* 46: 3, 2018, pp. 484-500.

⁶⁰ Brian C. J. Singer, „Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking Their Opposition", *History and Theory* 35: 3, 1996, pp. 309-337; Alex Toshkov, "On the Inadequacy of the Ethnic/Civic Antinomy: the Language Politics of Bulgarian Nationalism", *Nationalities Papers* 37: 3, 2009, pp. 277-298.

⁶¹ Azar Gat, with Alexander Yakobson, *Nations: the Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 328-379 (Chapter 7: "State, National Identity, Ethnicity: Normative and Constitutional Aspects").

⁶² John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism", in Eugene Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: the Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, Edward Arnold, 1976, pp. 22-36.

western space have been disclosed – together with their subsequent shift along the civic-assimilationist path⁶³ –, while at the same time the various historical episodes of the eastern context exhibiting the preponderance of the French-style conception of the nation have been identified in the same fashion (the whole class of discourses thus delineated including the political thinking of Polish noble republicanism,⁶⁴ together with that of Russian Decembrist liberalism⁶⁵). Lesser results have been obtained, otherwise, by the enterprises of intellectual archeology conceived for bringing to light the East-European visions of the past which can be seen as anticipations of the nowadays efforts targeted at elaborating the most appropriate institutional designs for the accommodation of the multicultural predicament.⁶⁶ Alongside the Austro-Marxists,⁶⁷ the group of relevant historic figures includes at least the Greek radical republican Rhigas Velestinlis, with his project for the multiculturalist reorganization on Jacobin philosophical bases of the Balkans, after the envisioned liberation from Ottoman rule and in the territorial frame of a revived

⁶³ Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁶⁴ Andrej Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kosciuszko*, Notre Dame, Ind., The University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

⁶⁵ Susanna Rabow-Edling, “The Decembrists and the Conception of a Civic Nation”, *Nationalities Papers* 35: 2, 2007, pp. 369-391.

⁶⁶ Siobhán Harty, Michael Murphy, *In Defense of Multinational Citizenship*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2005.

⁶⁷ Alfred Pfabigan, “The Political Feasibility of Austro-Marxist Proposals for the Solution of the Nationality Problem of the Danubian Monarchy”, in Uri Ra’anan et al., eds., *State and Nation in Multi-ethnic Societies. The Breakup of Multinational States*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991, pp. 53-63; Efraim Nimni, “Nationalist Multiculturalism in Late Imperial Austria as a Critique of Contemporary Liberalism: the Case of Bauer and Renner”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4: 3, 1999, pp. 289-314.

Byzantine Empire.⁶⁸ It is by reference to such a situation that the present article sets forth to develop an older pleading for an interpretation of the historical experience of Eastern Europe able to nurture, by the means of an adjusted collective memory, the consciousness of the multicultural complexities of the region, together with that of the limited applicability in the context of the model of civic integration implemented for so long in the West.⁶⁹ The British and Hungarian reflections surveyed in the beginning and formulated in connection to the antecedents and the consequences of the Trianon Treaty can only constitute new sources of support for consolidating the same historical account. And it is also in this guise that we have to look at a splendid article of 1933 by Oscar Jászi, where the attitude of Lajos Kossuth of rejecting at the 1848 moment any possible perspective on the national question within the borders of historic Hungary likely to go beyond the horizon of an attempt at overimposing a centralizing and assimilationist melting pot of the French variety on the prevailing patchwork of national identities set on the course of gradual growth on the Herderian pattern⁷⁰ is shown as a constitutive factor of the evolution towards the outcome of 1920.⁷¹

It is beyond doubt that Jászi did have a subtler perception of the issue than a later American historian of Hungarian origin, author of a landmark work of the 1970's devoted to the figure of Kossuth⁷² and an unqualified

⁶⁸ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "An Enlightenment Perspective on Balkan Cultural Pluralism: the Republican Vision of Rhigas Velestinlis", *History of Political Thought* 24: 3, 2003, pp. 465-479.

⁶⁹ See Chapter 3 above.

⁷⁰ F. M. Barnard, *Self-direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.

⁷¹ Oscar Jászi, "Kossuth and the Treaty of Trianon", *Foreign Affairs* 12: 1, 1933, pp. 86-97.

⁷² István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979.

supporter of the idea – thus defended by him as part of a debate of the time – that his hero had “attempted to extend the blessings of liberal and social legislation to all non-Magyar ethnic groups under the Crown of St. Stephen on condition that they accept the benevolent leadership of the Magyar nation and in particular of the reformist Hungarian lower nobility”, and for that reason “he could never understand the ingratitude of the peoples he had so genuinely wanted to help”.⁷³ To the same extent, we can only read the rejoinder offered with that occasion by a Romanian historian – and relying on the statement that “the aspirations of a people struggling for existence as a nation and for national freedom in accordance with principles prevailing at the time are as legitimate as those of the Magyar nation itself”⁷⁴ – in the light of Macartney’s assessment of 1937 according to which the Romanian post-1918 policies in the domain of minorities stood as a mirror-image of the previous Hungarian ones of the sort (displaying in the main, that is, the same shortcomings as the latter ones). Closer to the position here adopted is the argument advanced by another – this time British, and more recent – author of Hungarian origins, when surveying the 1868 law of nationalities and the debates surrounding it in order to conclude: “Hungarian liberals could be blamed for their failure to invent principles which liberals in the West did not profess and, at least in France and in England, did not need”.⁷⁵ Which means that they did not think in the same way as Rhigas Velestinlis, Otto Bauer and Oscar Jászi, all

⁷³ Idem, “Lajos Kossuth’s Nationalism and Internationalism”, *Austrian History Yearbook* 12-13, 1976-1977, p. 49.

⁷⁴ Cornelia Bodea, “Comments”, *Austrian History Yearbook* 12-13, 1976-1977, p. 55.

⁷⁵ László Péter, “Law XLIV of 1868 ‘on the Equality of Nationality Rights’ and the Language of Local Administration”, in *Hungary’s Long Nineteenth Century: Constitutional and Democratic Traditions in a European Perspective*, ed. by Miklós Lojkó, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 354.

of them able to understand – not unlike a score of pioneers of the sociology of backwardness and modernization from the East European periphery, for that matter⁷⁶ – that they had to cope with novel dilemmas, with no counterpart in the historical experience of the West. This is for sure a right judgment, unfortunately.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 5 above.

9. On Trianon in the Age of the New Anti-racialist Protest: Two Species of the Dialogue with History and an Attempt at Harmonization

Although assembled several years after the consummation of the centennial commemoration of 1918, the conference which offered the occasion for the delivery of the present article featured within a series of manifestations intended – among other objectives – to keep alive a fruitful reflection regarding the significance of one of the founding events of contemporary Romanian society: namely, the union taking place over the last stages of the First World War, further consecrated in the sphere of international relations through the Paris Peace Settlement of 1919-1920. For sure, the intervention advanced here has to be understood as part of a reflection targeting all the dramatic moments, memorable gestures and influential discourses exhibited by the process of historical change in question, unfolding about one century ago. One of the components of this process was chosen, however, as the best embodiment of the dilemmas that continue to be associated with it. Bestowing official recognition upon the transfer to the Romanian state of the largest among the provinces which were added to it during that privileged era, the Treaty of Trianon can be invoked as a symbol of the entire constellation of optimistic expectations, recurring disappointments, obstinate certainties and lasting

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misgivings crystallized over time around the idea of the nation, the politics of nationalism and the historical form of the national state within the context of the eastern half of Europe as well as throughout the rest of the world.

1

There is no doubt that the dialogue with history can only proceed along various layers of the present and in relation to a multiplicity of absorbing concerns and dominant values of today.¹ Our meditations regarding what happened at Trianon and in its surroundings at 1920 can make no exception to this rule. It appears, nevertheless, that nothing can offer a better testimony for the wide gap between the public spirit prevalent in the milieu where we happen to live and the stark predilections displayed by the debates underway in other places than the persistence of our concern for the developments evoked, over a period that will most probably be enshrined, in collective global memory, as defined by the intensity of the revolt manifested by an inflamed public consciousness against the whole cluster of symbols reminiscent of the main tenets of racist and colonialist culture. Indeed, it so happens that we have discussed about the meanings of the Great Union at a juncture when the rise of nationalist populism goes together with the radicalization of social movements sustained by the idea of political correctness, itself deployed primarily in the domain of the relations between racial groups, in their turn involving the permanent refurbishment of the nightmare of centuries-long nefarious historical antecedents.

In other words, we celebrated 1918 and 1920 not only in the shadow of political forces epitomized by such

¹ Victor Rizeșcu, *Eseuri despre politica memoriei. Accente și recalibrări aniversare*, București, Neverland, 2020.

figures like Donald Trump or Viktor Orbán – and therefore facing the danger that any statement of well-pondered nationalism is likely to be mistaken for the malign extremist expressions of the same doctrine –, but also against the background of the American turmoil issuing from the violent death of George Perry Floyd, taking place in May 2020, which unleashed a rejuvenated campaign for the elimination of racist culture (within the fold of which there was laid down the goal of having the movie *Gone with the Wind* placed under interdiction²). Focusing, for a while, upon the demand of removing to museums of infamy all the sculptural effigies of the Belgian king Leopold II – a leading exponent of *La Belle Époque* bloody colonialism³ – the global protest against the insidious survival of the same racist and imperialist cultural patterns most recently got expressed – not earlier than June 2021 – in the guise of the urging coming from the part of a group of students from Magdalen College, Oxford to the extent that a picture of queen Elisabeth II should in the same fashion be removed from a common room of the institution (in so far as it was perceived as a symbol of the colonialist drive with racist implications followed by the most majestic of all the imperial powers of the modern age).⁴

It is undeniable, however, that none of the recent debates pertaining to the category thus delineated is

² Idem, “Corectitudinea politică în două registre. Pornind de la cazul *Pe aripile vântului*”, *Observator cultural* 1018 (759), June 18-24, 2020, p. 4.

³ Idem, “Notre-Dame și statuile lui Leopold. Două atitudini contradictorii și o propunere de armonizare”, *Argumente și fapte.ro*, July 15, 2020.

⁴ “Students at an Oxford College Remove the Queen’s Portrait, Citing Colonialism” (June 9, 2021). Accessed on December 22, 2021, at <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/09/1004715773/students-oxford-college-magdalen-remove-queen-elizabeth-portrait-colonialism?t=1640266600647>

more telling for us – and from the standpoint of the troublesome correlation between the present and the past, indicated above – than the one provoked by the decision adopted on June 26, 2020 by the board of trustees of Princeton University to eliminate the name of president Woodrow Wilson from the frontispiece of the School of Public and International Affairs,⁵ at the end of a process put in train by the claims of such kind advanced by the Black Justice League for the first time in November 2015.⁶ In this case, the very figure most closely associated with the enterprise of redrawing the borders of Eastern Europe in line with the principles of the national state which was deployed one century ago⁷ – but whose words will also accompany in eternity the 1915 cinema masterpiece *The Birth of a Nation* (where they are quoted approvingly as the doctrinal foundations of a recognizably racist message, already obsolete by the time⁸) – is disclosed as a negative core reference of another variety of dialogue with history, which moreover seems to stay in an utterly disharmonic relation with our own collective identity discourse.

⁵ “Board of Trustees’ Decision on Removing Woodrow Wilson’s Name from Public Policy School and Residential College” (June 27, 2020). Accessed on December 22, 2021 at <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/06/27/board-trustees-decision-removing-woodrow-wilsons-name-public-policy-school-and>

⁶ “Princeton Students Demand Removal of Woodrow Wilson’s Name from Buildings” (November 23, 2015). Accessed on December 22, 2021, at <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/23/princeton-woodrow-wilson-racism-students-remove-name>

⁷ Derek Heater, *National Self-determination: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy*, Houndmills, The Macmillan Press, 1994; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁸ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, „Woodrow Wilson and *The Birth of a Nation*: American Democracy and International Relations”, *Democracy and Statecraft* 18: 4, 2007, pp. 689-718.

A cautious clarification might be in order before going further: not unlike other philosophical visions, that of political correctness can be encountered as cast both in moderate and in extremist formulations. In this connection, the moderate stance involves the mere acceptance of the need – as clearly as possible spelled down, nevertheless – of the consistent popular propagation and genuine social dissemination of democratic political theory, taken in its broadest possible understanding. Otherwise, extremism draws upon the ambition of foisting democratic discipline upon people in the spirit of a military camp, hand in hand with the inquisitorial selection of the cultural inventory and of the symbolic structures that qualify as deserving to be preserved within the space of democracy cleansed in such a manner.⁹ It follows, therefore, that the excessive expressions and the obtuse drifts of political correctness – likely to nurture the nationalist populist reaction already mentioned and, thus, to contribute to the entrenchment of the novel form of ideological polarization that we experience at the beginning of the new millennium – can only be counteracted on the basis of the uninhibited acceptance of the same set of ideas in their moderate interpretation (with their corresponding insertion along the trajectory of political development whose successive stages have exhibited the shaping of the liberal rule of law state, the extension of participatory democracy, the forging of the institutions of social protection and the articulation of the devices designed for the administration of cultural diversity, which will be invoked again in the following).

For sure, the Wilsonian pleading in favor of the adjustment of political borders such as to make them as closely coincident as possible with the fault-lines separating national groups from each other was meant, in our region,

⁹ Răzescu, “Corectitudinea politică în două registre”; Idem, “Notre-Dame și statuile lui Leopold”.

to redress the inconveniences of imperial arrangements of a more archaic kind than those of North-Atlantic colonialism.¹⁰ Even in such circumstances, it is hard to deny that, when addressed from the standpoint of the elements shared by all its particular embodiments, the ideology of the national state emerges as always set in close correlation with the historical dynamic of Eurocentric imperialism. Therefore, one can easily be tempted to draw from this the conclusion that the (no matter how dubitative) insistence upon its defining principles and symbols – in relation to the extended centenary of 1918-1920 – can have no other meaning but the striving to resuscitate it, on the periphery of the old continent, precisely at a time when – as shown by the brief survey advanced above and covering the multifaceted expressions of the anti-colonial creed featuring at the same juncture – the same ideology is faced with a new surge of corrosive criticism in the West. It is for this reason that the following pages are meant to establish a relation of harmonious communication between the two species of the dialogue with history thus identified, by opposition to the disturbing perception of convulsive juxtaposition between them that has been delineated so far.

2

In his book of 1944 about “national self-determination”, the British historian Alfred Cobban – better known as a predecessor of François Furet within the fold of the deconstructionist approach to the left-wing discourse regarding the French Revolution¹¹ – offered a retrospective

¹⁰ Karen Barkey, Mark von Hagen, eds., *Multiethnic Societies and Nation-building: the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires*, Bolder, Colo., Westview Press, 1997; Dominic Lieven, “Dilemmas of Empire, 1850-1918: Power, Territory, Identity”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 34: 2, 1999, pp. 163-200.

¹¹ Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, sec. ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Gary

and painstaking analysis of the negotiations taking place within the framework of the Paris Peace Conference, in order to formulate the bitter conclusion that at the time “the British and American delegations were anxious to confine self-determination to Europe, while the French and American delegations would have preferred to confine it to utopia”.¹² When saying this, he certainly did not intend only to bring to light the troubled mixture of *Realpolitik* and Wilsonian idealism – no matter how stained with racist prejudices – staying behind the effort of redrawing the borders of Eastern Europe (otherwise, as we remember, a mixture embodied by the first leader of the Romanian delegation, Ion I. C. Brătianu, better than by any other participant in the event¹³). Writing during the last years of the struggle against Hitler and militarist Japan, he was worriedly anticipating the fact that the envisioned new peace arrangements were to function as a turning point in the process of the transfer of self-determination movements from Europe towards the world placed outside it and beyond the confines of the North-Atlantic space, in continuation to the earlier – however inconsistent – discussions and experiments with such a stake, which had taken place in the footsteps of the previous world war (most penetratingly mirrored in the pages of the imposing work about “national states and national minorities” published in 1934 by the British colleague of Cobban, C. A. Macartney¹⁴ and whose general theses about the politics of the League of

Cates, ed., *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, London, Routledge, 1998.

¹² Alfred Cobban, *National Self-determination*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1947 [1944], p. 22.

¹³ Sherman D. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference: a Study of the Diplomacy of Ion I. C. Brătianu*, New York, Bookman Associates, 1962.

¹⁴ C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, London, Oxford University Press, 1934.

Nations in the domain of the national question were to be restated, in 1937, as a frame of reference for the investigations of the same author into the problems of "Hungary and her successors"¹⁵).

No matter the obvious skepticism shown by Cobban with regard to the consistence and feasibility that the politics with such theoretical foundations could be expected to have in Asian and African contexts, the United Nations Charter adopted in the following year clearly asserted for the first time the principle of self-determination as an article of international law. This amounted to nothing more than the reluctant formulation contained in Chapter I, Article 1, where it is only said that the organization assumed the task "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace" (with the clarifications brought in Chapter XI, Article 73, where it is added that the "members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government" partake in the task "to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the political circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of development").

There was scored thus a considerable advance in terms of the consecration of the principle of self-determination, by comparison to the vague anticipation offered by the foundational document of the League of

¹⁵ Idem, *Hungary and Her Successors: the Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences*, London, Oxford University Press, 1937.

Nations, adopted in 1919 and entered into force in January 1920. Indeed, Article 22 of the Covenant only speaks – somewhat cryptically – about the expedient administration under the regime of the mandate of those “colonies and territories which, as a consequence of the last war, have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the states which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world”, with the clarification that in such cases “there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization”.

The same applies, of course, by comparison to the political program of the “14 Points” advanced by Wilson in the American Congress in January 1918, where the idea is promoted without ever being stated in general terms, as part of assertions to the extent that “a readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality” (Point IX), that “the peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development” (Point X), that “the Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Ottoman rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development” (Point 12) or that “an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea” (Point 13).¹⁶

¹⁶ Recent commentaries in Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2020.

The period after 1945 has witnessed tiresome debates on the issue whether the principle of the self-determination of human communities could be harmonized with that of state sovereignty, being asserted as an absolute right and not just as an idea open to various interpretations, moreover being applied to entities defined as “national communities” and not – with elusive generosity – as mere “peoples”.¹⁷ Otherwise, the reservations of Cobban were conjoined, at the time they were formulated, with the resolute rejection of nationalist politics from the standpoint of a philosophical construction which never fully abandoned the social-democratic ideals, in the most important work in the field of political theory coming from Karl Popper, where it is said that the conception of the national state “now forms [...] an implicit assumption of popular political thought, [...] especially since Wilson’s well-meant but less well-considered principle of national self-determination”¹⁸ (with the addition that the same body of ideas constitute “an irrational, a Romantic and utopian dream, a dream of [...] tribal collectivism”¹⁹). Taking account of this, it is easy to understand that the right-wing varieties of Cold War liberalism, offered by Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, extolled the same

¹⁷ Inis L. Claude, *National Minorities: an International Problem*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1955; Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-determination: the Accommodation of Conflicting Rights*, rev. ed., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

¹⁸ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 2: *the High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, London, George Routledge & Sons, LTD., 1947 [1945], p. 48.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49. See also relevant commentaries in Malachi Haim Hacohen, “Dilemmas of Cosmopolitanism: Karl Popper, Jewish Identity and ‘Central European Culture’”, *The Journal of Modern History* 71: 1, 1999, pp. 105-149; Gal Gerson, “Nationality in the Open Society: Popper versus Hayes and Kohn”, *Nations and Nationalism* 25: 1, 2019, pp. 208-228.

hostility towards everything connected with the unclear notions from within the sphere of the national phenomenon.²⁰

Moreover, the considerations put forward by Cobban with hardly recognizable conservative accents were to be soon followed by the wide dissemination of an anti-nationalist and anti-Wilsonian wisdom, set in continuity with the ideas expressed by Lord Acton over the era of Italian unification – in the early 1860's²¹ –, but also refashioned in the language of the conservative vision wide-ragingly and multifariously elaborated by the school of Michael Oakeshott.²² Following the line of interpretation inaugurated with his book *England and the Middle East: the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*,²³ published in 1956 after being rejected as a doctoral dissertation at Oxford – and in correlation with other interventions coming from within the frame of the same school and given by political scientists like Kenneth Minogue,²⁴ D. J. Manning,²⁵ Gordon Graham²⁶ or Noel

²⁰ Ludwig von Mises, *Nation, State and Economy: Contributions to the Politics and History of Our Time*, ed. and transl. by Leland B. Yeager, Bettina Bien Graves, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2006; Paul Kelly, "Liberalism and Nationalism", in Steven Wall, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 329-351.

²¹ Lord Acton, "Nationality" [1862], in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, Verso, 1996, pp. 17-38; Timothy Lang, "Lord Acton and the Insanity of Nationality", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63: 1, 2002, pp. 129-149.

²² Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, London, Methuen, 1962. Brief presentations of the school in Howard Williams, *Concepts of Ideology*, Brighton, Wheatsheaf Books, 1985, pp. 41-58, 90-97; Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 10-11.

²³ Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1921*, London, Bowes & Bowes, 1956.

²⁴ Kenneth Minogue, *The Liberal Mind*, New York, Vintage Books, 1968 [1963]; Idem, *Nationalism*, New York, Basic Books, Inc.,

O'Sullivan²⁷ –, Elie Kedourie treated in 1960 the general topic of “nationalism”,²⁸ then in 1970 the more special one of “nationalism in Asia and Africa”,²⁹ describing the process of the spread of national movements throughout the area of interference between the Ottoman traditional imperialism and the one of the modern stripe, promoted by the colonial powers, as the irrepressible expansion, with nefarious consequences, of the kind of political messianism brought into being by European speculations estranged from the precepts and temper of wise pragmatism (in order to then present – in his essay “The Chatham House Version”, also coming out in 1970³⁰ – the perspective promoted by the Royal Institute of International Affairs – under whose cover there had been published the books of Macartney and Cobban, issued in 1934 and 1944 respectively and invoked above by underscoring their eminently well-pondered assessments of the chances that nationalist politics could be expected to have at the global level – as a self-infatuating, falsely humanitarian discourse set in a relation of complicity with the stance of radical anti-colonialism³¹).

1967; Idem, *Alien Powers: the Pure Theory of Ideology*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985.

²⁵ D. J. Manning, *Liberalism*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976.

²⁶ Gordon Graham, *Politics in Its Place: a Study of Six Ideologies*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986.

²⁷ Noel O'Sullivan, *Conservatism*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976; Idem, *Fascism*, London, Dent, 1983.

²⁸ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London, Hutchinson, 1960.

²⁹ Elie Kedourie, ed., *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, New York, World Publishing Company, 1970.

³⁰ Elie Kedourie, “The Chatham House Version”, in *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2004 [1970], pp. 351-394.

³¹ On the politics of the institution in question see Inderjeet Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy: a Comparative Study of the Role and Influence of the Council of Foreign Relations*

The immediate effect of the post-war attempt – taken at the time of de-colonization and of its aftermath – at universalizing the model of the national state³² was thus nothing else but a temporary augmentation of academic skepticism regarding the philosophical foundations of that political form, as well as of its feasibility in the actual world of human affairs. For several decades, there got wide acceptance precisely the conceptions according to which the national dimension of politics could only be treated as a contingency and a necessary evil and from which derived the conclusions that the normative bases and the constitutional frame of liberal democracy had to be built by avoiding any precise reference to the factor of cultural belonging, that collective identities had to be administered according to the melting pot, assimilationist recipe and that the demands for the recognition of diversity – no matter whether predicated on ethno-national or on other prevalent criteria – had to be tackled in light of the promising, but misleading vision placed under the label of “benign neglect”.³³

However, over the long run of historical evolution after the Second World War, nationalist politics unfolding outside Europe – but set within the paradigm of the East European developments in the era of the Paris Peace

and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939-1945, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

³² Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: the Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1960; John Plamenatz, *On Alien Rule and Self-government*, London, Longmans, 1960.

³³ Vernon van Dyke, “The Individual, the State and Ethnic Communities in Political Theory” [1977], in Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 31-56; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, Chapter 4: “Rethinking the Liberal Tradition”, pp. 49-74.

Settlement and of the League of Nations – have had as a result an acute revelation – with longer-lasting effects, this time – of the condition of inescapable intermingling, across political borders, between the human communities of all continents. Emerging against the background of decolonization – and to a great extent as a very consequence of it –, the phenomenon of globalization has then acted in such a way as to both consolidate the global multicultural patchwork and strengthen the convictions regarding the desirability and urgency of the measures meant to allow its administration on legal and institutional grounds enjoying a permanent status (most often within the confines of political structures with a national state definition, appropriately readjusted but not completely discarded³⁴).

It was thus that the shock wave of the arrangements installed within the fold of Trianon that has contributed, over the long run, to the creation of a constellation of social life that has also made possible the protests of today against the survivals and the vestiges of the racist culture shaped during the era of imperialism. Otherwise, nowadays multiculturalist wisdom can offer heuristic instruments able to open new insights into the meanings of the territorial reconfigurations set in train a century ago. Indeed, if one can agree that multiculturalism – in so far as it is

³⁴ David Miller, “The Nation-state: a Modest Defense”, in Chris Brown, ed., *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 137-162; Idem, *National Responsibility and Global Justice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; Azar Gat, with Alexander Yakobson, *Nations: the Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, Chapter 7: „State, National Identity, Ethnicity: Normative and Constitutional Aspects”, pp. 328-379. See, however, for the perspective of the multinational state: Siobhán Harty, Michael Murphy, *In Defence of Multinational Citizenship*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2005.

theorized and practiced in the spirit of moderation invoked above in connection to the political correctness from which it cannot be separated – has come into being by the means of the consistent development – across a series of historical fractures – of Mazzinian and Wilsonian nationalism, by the same token one can understand that the diagnoses of the regional multicultural puzzles formulated by the Austro-Marxists Karl Renner,³⁵ Otto Bauer³⁶ and Oscar Jászi³⁷ at the turn of the XIXth to the XXth centuries – together with the projects advanced by them as solutions to the conflicts between the national groups of the age – have to be seen now as sustained by better perceptions of the intricacies involved than the Wilsonian orthodoxy of the moment.³⁸

In light of the same multiculturalist wisdom, the transition that our region then took from the model of the old imperial polities claiming legitimacy of the traditional kind to that of the modern political bodies sustained by the ideal of the closest possible approximation of ethnic homogeneity – an ideal originally taken as a precondition of democratization and anticipated, before 1918, by the Hungarian efforts targeting the forging of a national state

³⁵ Karl Renner, “State and Nation: a Constitutional Investigation of the Possible Principles of a Solution and the Juridical Prerequisites for a Law of Nationalities”, in Mark E. Blum, William Smaldone, eds., *Austro-Marxism: the Ideology of Unity*, vol. 1: *Austro-Marxist Theory and Strategy*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 369-403.

³⁶ Otto Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, transl. by Joseph O'Donnell, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

³⁷ Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1929; Idem, „Kossuth and the Treaty of Trianon”, *Foreign Affairs* 12: 1, 1933, pp. 86-97.

³⁸ Efraim Nimni, “Nationalist Multiculturalism in Late Imperial Austria as a Critique of Contemporary Liberalism: the Case of Bauer and Renner”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4: 3, 1999, pp. 289-314. See also Chapters 3 and 8 above.

within the borders of the medieval kingdom³⁹ – appears as nothing else but a stage in the historical evolution of not only the condition of multinationalism and pluriethnicity but also of the broader political dynamic grounded on identity cleavages about whose significance and complexity we are growing ever more acutely aware. For sure, the symbolism of that historical stage itself can and has to be handled by employing a language patterned on the one featuring in the debate about the history and the consequences of other imperialisms, more stringently remembered at the present juncture outside the part of the world where we are located.

³⁹ A recent approach: Ferenc Hörcher, Thomas Lorman, eds., *A History of the Hungarian Constitution: Law, Government and Political Culture in Central Europe*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2019. See also the review by the present author in *Studii și materiale de istorie modernă* 34, 2021, pp. 137-139.

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All throughout the decades following after the demise of communism, the reinterpretations of particular topics of Romanian history went together with a search for the re-conceptualization of the historical evolution of the country taken over the long run. Various layers of the process of change could be selected as privileged targets for the deployment of such an effort. The present book has to be seen as an instance of this collective search. It is premised on the conviction that any meaningful engagement with specific subjects involving the interplay between ideological patterns, social structures and public policies over the modern and contemporary periods of Romanian history can only have as a precondition the forging of an appropriate broad vision regarding the unfolding of basic political ideas from the beginning of modernization on the western model to the installation of the communist regime.

Pursuing in his series of works investigations leading from general to ever more particular areas of research, the author has felt the need of recurrently coming back to the specific accents and conceptualizations laid down here, in order to elaborate further upon them without ever discarding the basic statements advanced. The second edition of the book is the result of this search for clarifying broad meanings behind historical details.

Victor Rizescu

Victor Rizescu, one of the most respected Romanian scholars in the field, highly appreciated for his contributions to the analysis and interpretation of modern Romania's intellectual history, offers in this book a work of synthesis that, at the same time, opens up fresh insights on a series of important themes defining the process of modernization from a comparative perspective. The book is thus a contribution not only to those interested in Romania and Eastern European "area studies" but also to comparativists and all those involved in research centered on the conceptualizations of social structures and change from a historical perspective. Moreover, the book is highly relevant for the current debates on questions related to nation-states, national identities, globalization, and Europeanization processes, and the extrapolation of modernization trends in the post-modern world of the XXI century. It is indeed a book to be recommended not only to specialists but to the general public as well.

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